

# INVASIVE WOODY VINES

## HOW TO REMOVE INVASIVE VINES FROM TREES

### Invasive woody vines can kill trees.

#### English ivy and other invasive woody vines can kill otherwise healthy trees.

Dense ivy or other invasive woody vines hold moisture against the trunk which may cause bark to split and rot. Some woody vines such as Asian wisteria can strangle trees by wrapping tightly around the bark. Once vines reach the tree's canopy, they can form a thick blanket that blocks sunlight to the tree's leaves, reducing the tree's ability to produce food through photosynthesis. Ivy and other vines can add enough additional weight (up to a ton) to cause catastrophic failure, including breaking limbs or causing the entire tree to fall. Some types of vines can cover the bark densely with leaves, increasing the tree's wind load and the likelihood that the tree will fall during a storm.



### Three steps to remove invasive woody vines from trees:

# 1.

#### Cut vines from the lower trunk of the tree.

Use garden clippers or loppers to cut the vine near the ground at the bottom of the tree all the way around the trunk. This separates the vines from their source of water and nutrients in the soil which will cause the vines to die. If vines are thick, you will need to use a saw to carefully cut the vine, making sure not to nick or damage the tree's bark. **Cutting into the bark can severely harm or even kill the tree.** Experiment with the tools that work best for you. Use only non-motorized hand tools. Make an additional cut of each vine at approximately four feet from the ground to ensure all vines are completely severed. Without damaging the bark, remove the section of vine from the tree between the two cuts. If you cannot remove this section of vines without damaging the tree, wait a few weeks until the vine dries out and try again. If pulling off a section of the vine would damage the tree, you may leave it in place. **Do NOT pull the vines off the tree above the top cut because doing so could damage the tree.** If left alone, the vines will dry out and eventually fall from the tree without causing damage.

# 2.

#### Uproot vines to make a "life-saver" ring.

Establish a vine-free zone with a 3-foot radius around the tree to ensure that vines do not grow back onto the tree. After the vines are severed, pull vines away from the base of the tree and pull up any roots of the vines within the 3-foot radius. This is easiest to do after rain when the ground is soft. The cleared space allows you to see the roots of any vines you missed and to monitor the regrowth of vines.

# 3.

#### Mulch around the base of the tree.

Arborists recommend laying a 2-inch thick layer of leaf mulch or wood chips around the tree to preserve moisture in the soil and prevent mowers from damaging the base of the tree. Keep the mulch at least 6 inches away from the base of the tree to allow air exchange. Do not allow the mulch to touch the bark of the tree because it can cause rot or pest infestation.

**Woody invasive vines must be removed from trees on construction sites [Sec. 158-103 (h)].**

No tree with English ivy, kudzu, or other invasive woody vines may be counted as a healthy, preserved tree on a construction site. A site will not pass final inspection for a certificate of occupancy until vines are severed.

**Which woody vines are invasive in the Atlanta area?**

English ivy and kudzu are the most common *non-native invasive* woody vines that damage trees and native plants in the Atlanta area. Invasive vines can cause a serious problem in natural areas in Georgia by extensively invading and displacing native plant communities. Invasive woody vines can harm mature trees while most non-woody vines cannot climb high enough to impact mature trees. Non-woody vines can harm lower growing plants. Because invasive non-woody vines do not threaten the health of trees, they are not listed here.

 **REMOVE non-native vines. Do NOT allow the vines listed below to grow on trees:** 



English ivy  
(*Hedera helix*)



Kudzu  
(*Pueraria montana*)



Wisteria, Asian  
(*Wisteria floribunda*  
and *sinensis*)



Winter creeper  
(*Euonymus fortunei*)



Porcelain berry  
(*Ampelopsis glandulosa*  
var. *brevipedunculata*)



Oriental bittersweet  
(*Celastrus orbiculatus*)



Japanese honeysuckle  
(*Lonicera japonica*)



Chocolate vine  
(*Akebia quinata*)

For more information and photos of invasive vines in our area, visit the University of Georgia's Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health at [bugwood.org](http://bugwood.org). If you need help identifying vines, contact the City of Atlanta Arborist Division at [arborist.dpcd@atlantaga.gov](mailto:arborist.dpcd@atlantaga.gov) or by phone at 404-330-6874.

**Do NOT remove native woody vines.**

Native woody vines do not harm trees and provide an important part of our ecological system. They provide a food source for migrating songbirds, hummingbirds, and other wildlife.

✓ **Do NOT remove native vines. KEEP native vines such as those listed below:** ✓



Muscadine grape  
(*Vitis rotundifolia*)



Fox grape  
(*Vitis labrusca*)



Trumpet vine  
(*Campsis radicans*)



Crossvine  
(*Bignonia capreolata*)



Virginia creeper  
(*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)



Carolina jessamine  
(*Gelsemium sempervirens*)



Passion vine  
(*Passiflora incarnata*)



Coral honeysuckle  
(*Lonicera sempervirens*)



Climbing wild hydrangea  
(*Decumaria barbara*)

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