

Invasive plant: *Euonymus fortunei* (Winter Creeper)

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Photo: [Plant Invaders of Mid Atlantic Natural Areas](#)

Description: Winter Creeper (*Euonymus fortunei*) is a semi-evergreen vine that grows horizontally, quickly forming a thick ground cover (often mistaken for small periwinkle (*Vinca minor*)), and vertically, climbing trees, shrubs, walls, or anything in its path. Its leaves are small, oval, opposite, dark green, and slightly toothed (this helps distinguish it from *Vinca minor*). It thrives in sun and shade, and in all but heavy wet soils.



Ecological Damage: Winter Creeper, like English Ivy, rapidly covers open ground, displacing native understory species, restricting tree seedling establishment, smothering and killing shrubs and small trees by depriving leaves of sunlight, inhibiting photosynthesis ([JRPS](#)). As a horizontal ground cover, Winter Creeper produces no fruit, but it reaches its adult stage in vertical form, producing fruit that is consumed by birds, who then spread the seeds ([MO Invasives](#)).

Control/Management: The Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team recommends: “pull long vines up from along the ground to the point where they are rooted and dig or pull out small roots. Use a mattock or weed wrench to remove larger roots. Cut vines climbing trees at the base of the tree trunk and cut again three feet up the trunk. Remove cut vine from the base and cut back to its roots. Any part of the remaining plant system may re-root at a node, so keep cut vines from contact with soil while they dry out. If the vine is pulled in the fall while in fruit, the berries should be bagged and disposed of in a landfill – do not compost the berries. <https://www.fallschurchva.gov>. For large cut bases, treat with herbicide. For more information on proper treatment with herbicide, see [Blue Ridge Prism’s guide](#).

Alternative Plant Options: Epimedium (genus), Polystichum acrostichoides (Christmas Fern), Tiarella cordifolia (Foamflower), Pachysandra procumbens (Allegheny Spurge)