



BCT Stewardship Journal: August 2025

Katie's Thoughts from the Trail: The Ivy Invasion

If you have volunteered on a workday with us at BCT, then you likely share my disdain for the glossy green leaf-covered vine known as English Ivy. Often observed growing in thick mats along fences, trees, and the forest floor, this plant is a far too familiar sight on Cape Cod. While some folks still believe that it adds charm to the garden, I (and the majority of our BCT volunteer network) will tell you that this plant is far from harmless.

English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) was originally introduced (you guessed it) by European colonists in the 1870s and has since become an invasive menace across the US. In the 19th and 20th centuries, it was valued for its evergreen leaves and ability to climb walls and trellises. In fact, it was often planted deliberately as a ground cover to decorate stone walls throughout New England which of course offered an opportune mild climate and moist, shaded woodlands for this vine to go crazy. Spreading through aggressive horizontal stems that sprout roots as they go, our landscape did not stand a chance against the dense mats that would soon smother everything in its path. Furthermore, English ivy is also a climber, clinging onto trees and other vertical structures with its sticky rootlets. With the added heavy weight and moisture trapped, these trees are far more likely to succumb to wind damage, disease, and rot.

In many states such as Oregon and Washington, English ivy is listed as a prohibited noxious invasive plant (meaning it is illegal to sell), however it is not listed on the prohibited plant list in the state of Massachusetts and is still sold at many local garden centers. The [Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group \(MIPAG\)](#) determines this list and makes recommendations to the Mass. Dept. of Agricultural Resources on an annual basis. Perhaps this invasive plant will make its way on the prohibited list someday. In the meantime, there is much we can do to limit its spread. BCT has been conducting a large English ivy removal on our Bradanini property with the help of volunteers. Just by tilling up the ground and yanking out the roots and runners, we have already seen much success with other native groundcovers bouncing back such as Wintergreen, Jewelweed, and Virginia creeper. Fight persistence with persistence! Every bit of effort goes a long way to keep the ivy invasion at bay.



2024 BCT intern Prosser pulling up initial mats of English ivy from the Bradanini property



Bradanini property one year after initial removal efforts. See the native Jewelweed bouncing back!