



BEST PRACTICES

Help Protect Urban Wildlife Habitat

Remove & Replace Shade Tolerant Invasive Plant Species In Your Yard

How are English ivy, periwinkle, herb-Robert, yellow archangel and ajuga bugleweed alike? They are all common shade-loving plants that spread rapidly and become invasive in our forests and natural areas. They severely impact local habitat by overtaking the native plants that native wildlife depend on for food and shelter. Surprisingly enough, you will still find these invasive plants for sale at many home and garden centers!

Shady yards and forested areas provide the ideal growing conditions for these invaders. Their tolerance to shade allows them to overrun healthy forests, forming thick mats of vegetation that outcompete and smother beneficial native understory plants. They spread when people, animals, water and vehicles distribute seeds or plant fragments from yards and neighborhoods to forests and parks. Dumping yard waste is another major way invasive plants are spread. Eliminating invasive plants from your yard and disposing of them properly is one of the best ways to prevent their spread to our natural areas.

Replacing invasive plants with natives

You can help protect our local natural areas by removing and replacing invasive species in your yard. Our Pacific Northwest native plants provide high quality food and shelter for native wildlife. By replacing invasives with native plants you will also enhance habitat for wildlife species. Native plants are also easy to care for because they are well adapted to our unique climate. They are hardy, use less water, and do not require fertilizers, saving water and saving you time and money!

What to do

To remove invasive plants, loosen the soil around them with a digging fork and pull out as much of the root mass as possible. A digging fork is preferred to a shovel as it will reduce root breakage and allow you to remove more of the roots. It is best to pull herb-Robert and yellow archangel before their flowers have gone to seed.

It is very important to bag and trash the plants after pulling. Never put invasives into the yard waste bin, compost pile, or your jurisdictional drop-off site. Please, never dump yard debris into natural areas or storm ponds! Proper disposal ensures that the plants you remove will not spread or contaminate compost made from your yard debris.

Once your site is clear of invasives, replant with natives. On page seven you will find several beautiful alternatives that also provide wildlife habitat.

If mowing over invasive plants, remember to clean and wash your mower of plant fragments so they will not spread throughout your lawn.

Mulch & maintain

Add 2-3 inches of mulch around new native plants to protect them while they establish root systems and grow stronger. Mulch reduces moisture loss, covers and protects bare soil and inhibits new weed growth. You can buy mulch at your local garden supply store or make it at home. Compost, bark chips, fallen leaves and straw are common materials used as mulch.

For a few years, watch your replanted area for any new weed growth. Pull out new growth and remulch as needed. Removing and replacing invasive plants can require persistence, but the benefits to your yard and our community's ecosystem are well worth the effort. Enjoy your new native garden!



Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertium*)

How They Spread: Seeds

Removal Method: Pull in early spring before they go to seed or mow* before flowering if you cannot get them pulled.

More info: <http://tinyurl.com/herbrobert>



Yellow Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*)

How They Spread: Seeds, Rhizomes (runners) and roots

Removal Method: Pull in early spring before they go to seed or mow* before flowering if you cannot get them pulled.



Ajuga Bugleweed (*Ajuga reptans*)

How They Spread: Rhizomes (runners) and roots

Removal Method: Dig roots any time of year



Periwinkle (*Vinca minor* and *Vinca major*)

How They Spread: Seeds, Rhizomes (runners) and roots

Removal Method: Dig roots any time of year



English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

How They Spread: Berries/seeds

Removal Method: Pull or dig roots any time of year

Shade Loving Native Plant Alternatives

Groundcovers

- Pacific bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*)
- False lily-of-the-valley (*Maianthemum dilatatum*)
- Piggyback plant (*Tolmiea menziesii*)
- Fringecup (*Tellima grandiflora*)
- Slough sedge (*Carex obnupta*)
- Deer fern (*Blechnum spicant*)
- Sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*)

Shrubs

- Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*)
- Cascade Oregon-grape (*Mahonia nervosa*)
- Evergreen huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*)
- Red huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*)



For help identifying weeds or for more information on these and other invasive or naturalizing plants, visit:

- **Thurston County Noxious Weeds** at <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/tcweeds>
- **Master Gardeners of Thurston County** at <https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/gardening/>

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