

## Controlling Weedy Vines

Native and ornamental vines can become weedy problems in your ornamental trees, shrubs and flower beds. Many can be hard to control if left unchecked. Among these troublesome vines are cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*), bittersweet (*Celastrus* species), English ivy (*Hedera helix*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), wisteria (*Wisteria* species), Kudzu (*Pueraria montana*), greenbrier (*Smilax* species) and poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*).

Some of these, like English ivy, have ornamental value. Others, like Virginia creeper, are important sources of food for wildlife. In a perfect world, all of them would be maintained or removed when they're small plants.

Unfortunately, many people buy property that has vines rambling through flower beds and climbing up anything they can take hold of. Sometimes the previous property owner planted them as ornamentals and, unsupervised, the vines take over. Whatever the reason, if you have a vine you're trying to get rid of, a few tactics could help in your efforts.

First, consider trying to maintain the vine you're about to remove. English ivy, Virginia creeper and cross vine can be brought in bounds with a little pruning. Many of these plants can take years to reach the stature they've achieved. These plants don't become a problem overnight. Even the mighty kudzu can take years to cover a tree canopy.

You might want to consider, too: What will replace the green mass when it's gone? Is the vine really 'that big of a problem?' Can it be brought down to a manageable size if pruned? If you're adamant about removing the plant, there are two ways to do it: physically, or with herbicides. The effort of pulling up the vine will vary with the plant. A well-established wisteria can be hard to remove, requiring the use of heavy equipment. On the other side of the spectrum, a young cross vine can be easily removed just pulling it out.

If you're not opposed to using herbicides, a combination of the two control measures can be the best plan of attack. Many vines, like wisteria, kudzu and English ivy, can be partially controlled by simply cutting the vines a few inches above the ground and painting the freshly cut stem with a herbicide containing glyphosate (as in 41% Roundup) or triclopyr (as in Brush-B-Gone). Use both in full or half-strength solutions.

To the cut stem coming from the ground, apply herbicide with a paint brush right after you cut it. The degree of control will depend on the time of year (fall is better) and the plant species. If the vine starts to regrow, wait until the shoots are 6 to 12 inches long. Then treat them with a 5% solution of glyphosate (about 7 ounces to a gallon of water with a 41% active glyphosate product). Either spray it on or wipe it on with a sponge.

Glyphosate products leave no residue in the soil, so you may wish to consider this if treating vines that are located near other desirable plants in the landscape. The triclopyr product will work, too, but it does leave a residue in the soil. With any post emergent herbicide, take care to prevent spraying desirable plants' foliage and stems. And when you use any pesticide, always take time to read and follow the label instructions.

One final word of caution when clearing out vines - Often, mixed among ivys or other vines, is poison ivy. All parts of this plant are poisonous, especially sap from cut stumps or roots. Many people tell me, "I'm not allergic to poison ivy." I don't think there is a such thing as not allergic to the chemical that is in these plants called urushiol. Why take a chance. Cover all exposed skin and wash thoroughly with soap and water. Harsh reaction to poison ivy can really put a damper on your gardening efforts.