

Vines on trees may be UP to no good!

They may harm or even kill trees. This is especially true for English ivy, oriental bittersweet, and wisteria.

Vines that are allowed to grow up trees can shade them out, especially if they reach high into the canopy. They compete with trees, not only for sunlight, but also for water, nutrients, air, and space. Their weight alone can topple trees or break their branches, particularly if snow or ice is present, or the tree is already weakened by lack of adequate sunlight, water, nutrients, or infestations due to the vines. These bacterial, fungal, or insect infestations may result from excess moisture and decaying material kept close to the bark by vines.



Vines can be beneficial in the natural environment, providing food and shelter for birds. Some are less invasive and harmful than others. English ivy tends to weigh down trees. Oriental bittersweet and wisteria tend to spiral around them, choking them. Virginia creeper tends to be less harmful, and produces berries for birds.

If it is desired to remove a vine, this may be accomplished by:

1. Carefully, so as not to injure the tree bark, cut each vine at the base of the tree, and again about 3-4 feet above this (so the vine cannot repair itself). The lower part can be removed carefully, but leave the dead vine in the tree to decay and fall off rather than attempt to pull it down and risk damaging the tree.

2. If possible, dig up, pull and cut the vine roots away from the tree base.

3. Mulching the base after removing the vine roots would be ideal—but keep it at least 3 inches away from the trunk and root flares of the tree.