

# Periwinkle

## *Vinca minor*



Pictures By (From top to bottom):  
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www.invasive.org and D. Tenaglia  
@ www.invasive.org.

### ***Invasive Plants are a Threat to:***

- **Forests and wetlands**
- **Native plants**
- **Perennial gardens**
- **Wildlife**
- **Lakes and rivers**
- **Human health**
- **Farmland**

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### **Description:**

*Vinca minor* is a perennial, evergreen herb that matures at about 6" tall and stems that continue to elongate each year to many yards in length. It exhibits a trailing mat, prostrate mat or mounding mat growth habit and has a medium growth rate. Its leaves are evergreen, elliptic and dark green above with a subtle white mid-vein. The flowers are predominantly blue-purple, originate from the leaf axils, composed of five fused pinwheel-like petals and a short tubular throat. They bloom in late March and April and sporadically throughout the growing season.

### **Distribution:**

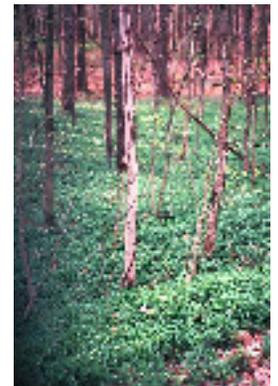
Periwinkle is frequently found in well-drained, open, disturbed ground of shaded woods, edges and roadsides. It is escaped throughout the eastern US, and can become a dominant and sometimes monotypic understory in the northeastern US. In Indiana, it has been found as an escaped species in all counties. It grows more aggressively in the south part of the state, covering hundreds of acres in southern Indiana forests.

### **Problem:**

Once established, *Vinca minor* forms a dense carpet to the exclusion of other plants. This creates a problem where it is competing with native flora. In ideal growth conditions, *Vinca minor* can spread with great rapidity by means of its arching stolons, which root at the tips. Dry or cold weather may temporarily set growth back, but it quickly resprouts and regains lost ground coverage. It grows most vigorously in moist soil with only partial sun, but it can grow in the deepest shade and even in poor soil.

### **Origin:**

*Vinca minor* is a native from southern Switzerland southward around much of the Mediterranean basin, from Portugal to Turkey, and across much of north Africa. It has been introduced in the United States as a medicinal herb and as an ornamental ground cover.



Picture By: Ellen Jacquart

### **IPSAWG Ranking:**



### **IPSAWG Recommendation:**

- Plant periwinkle only next to concrete or lawns; do not plant next to natural areas.
- Help by eradicating any periwinkle adjacent to or in natural areas on your property.

This ranking illustrates the results of an assessment conducted by the **Invasive Plant Species Assessment Working Group (IPSAWG)**, which is made up of many organizations and agencies concerned about invasive plant species. IPSAWG's goal is to assess which plant species may threaten natural areas in Indiana and develop recommendations to reduce their use in the state.

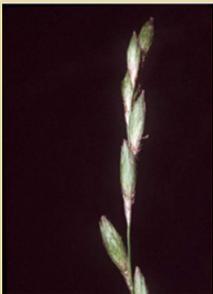
For more information about IPSAWG and the assessment tool used to rank invasive species, visit their website:

[www.invasivespecies.IN.gov](http://www.invasivespecies.IN.gov)

## ALTERNATIVES to Periwinkle:



Dwarf Crested Iris  
(*Iris cristata*)



Palm Sedge  
(*Carex muskingumensis*)



Wild Ginger  
(*Asarum canadense*)



Creeping Phlox  
(*Phlox subulata*)

Pictures By (Top to Bottom): Kay Yatskievych, R. H. Mohlenbrock @ USDA-NRCS Plants Database, Dennis W. Woodland and Thomas Barnes @ USDA-NRCS Plants Database.

## Control Methods:

Periwinkle can be pulled, raked, or dug up, though resprouting will occur. It can also be cut or mowed in spring during its rapid growth stage followed by a foliar application of glyphosate on the resprouts. Herbicide alone can be used as a control method. Thoroughly wet all leaves with triclopyr (Garlon 3A) or glyphosate (Roundup) mixed according to label directions at the highest allowed rate plus a non-ionic surfactant. This should be done between July to October for successive years.

In winter, herbicide treatments should be limited to days when the high temperature exceeds 50° F. No biological

controls are known.

**Always read and follow pesticide label directions.**



Picture By: J. Swearingen @ www.invasive.org.

## Eight Easy Ways to Combat Invasive Plants

You can **help stop** the spread of **invasive plants** by following these **8 easy guidelines**:

1. Ask for only non-invasive species when you acquire plants. Request that nurseries and garden centers sell only non-invasive plants.
2. Seek information on invasive plants. Sources include botanical gardens, horticulturists, conservationists, and government agencies.
3. Scout your property for invasive species, and remove invasives before they become a problem. If plants can't be removed, at least prevent them from going to seed.
4. Clean your boots before and after visiting a natural area to prevent the spread of invasive plant seeds.
5. Don't release aquarium plants into the wild.
6. Volunteer at local parks and natural areas to assist ongoing efforts to diminish the threat of invasive plants.
7. Help educate your community through personal contacts and in such settings as garden clubs and civic groups.
8. Support public policies and programs to control invasive plants.

### For More Information:

On this assessment and IPSAWG:

**IPSAWG**  
[www.invasivespecies.IN.gov](http://www.invasivespecies.IN.gov)

On identification and control techniques:

**The Nature Conservancy's Wildland Weeds**  
[www.tncweeds.ucdavis.edu](http://www.tncweeds.ucdavis.edu)

On native plant alternatives and sources:

**Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society**  
[www.inpaws.org](http://www.inpaws.org)

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