

INVASIVE SPECIES



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

Two species of periwinkle, Big-Leaf Periwinkle (*Vinca major*) and Small-Leaf Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), are considered invasive in Halton Region. These two species are similar in structure although the features of Big-leaf Periwinkle are comparatively larger than those of its smaller relative. Periwinkle is a creeping evergreen groundcover. It has slender trailing stems that can grow 1 to 2 metres long but do not grow more than 20 to 70 centimetres above ground. Its shiny, dark leaves taper at both ends and grow opposite each other on the stem. The violet-purple (rarely white) flowers appear in early spring, have five petals and are 2.5 to 7 centimetres broad.



Periwinkle was introduced to North America as a garden ornamental and medicinal herb

Concern

Periwinkle is an invasive groundcover plant that poses a threat to native biodiversity. It thrives in a number of habitats but the thickest growth is produced in moist and shady environments. Periwinkle spreads over large areas smothering native ground vegetation. Periwinkle is of key concern because it is readily available at many local nurseries and is often the first suggested fix for any 'problem' garden spot due to its ease of growth. Small-Leaf Periwinkle is the species most often sold at our local nurseries.

Distribution

Periwinkle is native to the Mediterranean basin but was introduced to both Australia and North America as a garden ornamental and medicinal herb. It is commonly found along roads, lawns, cemeteries, and forest understory.

Propagation

For the most part, periwinkle reproduces asexually through vegetative propagation. Its seeds rarely grow to maturity. Due to this vegetative propagation, Periwinkle can threaten native streambank vegetation by spreading through fragmented stems flowing through riverine habitats.

Control

The best way to prevent the spread of Periwinkle is to avoid using it as a garden plant. Possible control methods include:

manual removal, cutting, and chemical treatment. Periwinkle can be manually removed by digging out plants by hand, or by raising runners from the ground with a rake and mowing the plants. When manually removing periwinkle, it is important to remove all of the plant and its roots. Periwinkle can also be controlled by cutting the plants in the spring during active growth followed by an application of chemical herbicides. It is important to always remember to only use pesticides as a last resort in an educated and responsible manner.

Alternatives

There are many alternatives to planting periwinkle species in your garden.

The following is a list of acceptable groundcovers:

For Damp Shaded Areas:

Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*)

- a plant with beautiful white flowers that produces red berries.



Dwarf Raspberry (*Rubus pubescens*)

- a small running species of raspberry that spreads along the ground and will produce small red berries.

Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*)

- a slow-spreading plant that does well under full shade or in a woodland setting.

For Dryer Areas With More Sun:

Wild Thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*)

- a fragrant herb that produces many tiny purple flowers.



Wild Strawberries (*Fragaria virginiana* and *Fragaria vesca*)

- low, spreading strawberries that produce tasty small berries.

Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia pensylvanica*)

- a fern that can grow up to a metre tall (but is usually closer to a half metre) that can be used in almost any location. It spreads readily and has delicate cut leaves.

Conservation Halton Natural Champion for a Healthy Watershed



Conservation Halton is the community based environmental agency that protects, restores and manages the natural resources in its watershed. Conservation Halton has staff that includes ecologists, land use planners, engineers, foresters and educators, along with a network of volunteers, who are guided by a Board of Directors that includes municipally elected and appointed citizens. Conservation Halton is recognized for its stewardship of creeks, forests and Niagara Escarpment lands through science based programs and services.

For more information on Periwinkle and other Invasive Species contact Conservation Halton:

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