

How to remove the non-native invasive vine winter creeper (*Euonymus fortunei*) from your trees



A common sight in our neighborhood: a mature tree covered with the winter creeper vine, which can cause damage to the tree's overall health and structural integrity. This photo is of an overrun hackberry tree, the yellow leaves (autumn color) belong to the tree, the green leaves belong to the vine.



To get started, trim away the small winter creeper branches/twigs starting at ground level and up to shoulder height with loppers and pruning shears, so you can see what you're dealing with.



Use a pruning saw or power saw (pruning saw is safer but caution is still needed, see next page) to make two cuts in the vine 'trunk'; for example one at chest height and one at knee height. (If using a power saw set the blade depth to make shallow cuts through the vine and not into the tree bark.)
A big thank you to our neighbor [Micah Hargrove](#) for this demonstration!



It's important to remove the middle segment of the vine after making the cuts; otherwise the vine's vascular tissue will re-connect through the cut and continue to feed the upper parts. You might use a flat pry bar and a maul to separate the middle segment of a vine this size from the tree trunk. Then leave the section of vine above the removed section in place, to die and drop branches in the months to come. (Pulling the upper parts of the vine away from the tree could damage the bark.)



Success!

It's good practice to sterilize the saw afterwards with alcohol to reduce the transmission of certain plant diseases to healthy plants.

Now you can sit back and watch the winter creeper leaves and branches in the sections above the cut-out sections slowly die over the course of the next year.

To prevent regrowth, you can either treat the surface exposed at the lower cut with a concentrated weedkiller (be sure to treat immediately after cutting), or monitor regrowth from the vine roots in successive years and cut again. Loppers should be sufficient from now on to cut back new growth provided you see to it each year, and eventually the vine roots will die.

Some words about safety

Consider using a pruning saw for this job - these can be just as effective as a circular saw and are easier and safer to operate. This Corona folding saw is great at sawing through small to medium vines and limbs:



But be careful!! This saw is super sharp! Treat it with the same respect as you would a well-honed kitchen knife. Wear work gloves when operating. Also be aware, when pruning overhead, that sawdust may fall into your eyes.

How large a vine or limb can a pruning saw cut? This depends partly on your energy level: removing 3" - 4" in diameter will take some effort, up to 8" will take a lot of effort. For vines > 8" diameter this tool is probably not efficient or safe. A power saw would be an option for vines this large, but should not be used by someone without experience.