

# Common Periwinkle *Vinca minor L.*

## About Periwinkle

Periwinkle was introduced to North America in the 1700's, as an ornamental. This perennial evergreen plant reproduces by stolons and stems rooting at nodes and can form a dense groundcover layer. These characteristics have made it a commonly sold bedding plant. These characteristics also make it an invasive species that can crowd out and discourage the growth of native plants in conifer forests.

## Legal Status

No legal status in BC. EFlora classifies it as an exotic species that is problematic in the GVRD, Vancouver Island, Salish Sea and the Okanagan.

## Distribution

Commonly occurring in lowland zones, especially by roadsides and waste places from Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Lower Mainland. Infrequent in SW BC. Originates from Eurasia.



Periwinkle Distribution  
(2011)

## Identification

**Flowers:** This evergreen vine produces single blue-purple, sometimes white or violet pinwheel-like flowers, 1 per stem, late spring or early summer blooms are usually 20-30 mm wide, calyx lobes glabrous.

**Stems:** Evergreen slender stem, 10-60 cm long, branched out to form trailing and spreading groundcover.

**Leaves:** Opposite, glossy, thick, dark green, egg or oval shaped leaves narrow at base, 3-9 cm long.

**Fruits:** 3-5 cm long, cylindrical pods

**Similar Native Species:** Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*, *C. suecica*, *C. unalaschkensis*), Woodland Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*), False Lily-of-the-valley (*Maianthemum dilatatum*), Small-flowered Alumroot (*Heuchera micrantha*), Kinnickinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*).

**Similar Non-Native Species:** Big leaf periwinkle (*Vinca major L.*), Madagascar periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*), Winter Creeper (*Euonymus fortune*), Wild Ginger (*Asarium caudatum*), Piggy-back plant (*Tolmiea menziesii*), Yerba Beuna (*Clinopodium douglasii*).



## Ecological Characteristics

**Habitat:** Prominent in Lower Mainland area of BC. Prefers moist sites in forested areas and along watercourses. It is shade tolerant and extremely adaptable to many growing conditions.

**Reproduction:** Cross-pollinating, vegetative regeneration by rhizomes.

**Dispersal:** Sold through horticulture trade as rapid spreading ground cover and sometimes dispersed by ants. Seeds are released upon splitting open. Although no literature was found on dispersal, the lack of hair or wings on the seed implies it falls straight to the ground.

## Impact

**Economic:** Unpalatable to livestock

**Ecological:** Common Periwinkle is highly adaptable and forms dense mats even in shady areas causing it to squeeze out native vegetation in area

## Integrated Pest Management

*IPM is a decision-making process that includes identification and inventory of invasive plant populations, assessment of the risks that they pose, development of well-informed control options that may include a number of methods, site treatment, and monitoring.*

### A. Prevention

- » Educate gardeners and horticulturists to prevent active distribution and trading.
- » Do not move soil that possibly contains seeds or root fragments.

### B. Mechanical control

- » Small infestations and seedlings can be pulled, “matting” for 4-6 months may also be useful for smaller infestations.

### C. Biological Control

While there are no specific bio-control agents for this plant is susceptible to fungal foliar disease.

### D. Chemical Control

Herbicide recommendations and use must first consider site characteristics and be prescribed based on site goals and objectives. Herbicide labels and other sources of information must be reviewed before selecting and applying herbicides.

- » Foliar glyphosate herbicide application in spring after mechanical methods will discourage regrowth.

Application of herbicides on Crown land must be carried out following a confirmed Pest Management Plan (*Integrated Pest Management Act*) and under the supervision of a certified applicator. [www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/epdpa/ipmp/index.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/epdpa/ipmp/index.html)



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## Disposal

**Note:** Disposal of invasive plants varies by region. Contact your local government for specific information on how to dispose of your invasive plants.

- » Chemically treated plants can be left on site to compost.
- » Tarp and bag removed plants, plant parts and seeds before transporting to a designate disposal site (e.g. landfill or transfer station).
- » It is recommended that transfer stations provide disposal bins intended solely for invasive plants. This will ensure the plant matter within the container is transported in a sealed unit and properly disposed of at the landfill.
- » Burning and composting at home is not recommended as extreme temperatures are required.

## References/Links

E-Flora BC. <http://linnet.geog.ubc.ca/Atlas/Atlas.aspx?sciname=Vinca%20minor>

Evergreen Website. <https://www.evergreen.ca/downloads/pdfs/Invasive-Plant-Profile-Periwinkle.pdf>

Invasive Plants of Pennsylvania. [http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_010310.pdf](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_010310.pdf)

Invasive Species Council BC. <http://bcinvasives.ca/>

Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council. [www.ssisc.info/](http://www.ssisc.info/)

U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/vine/vinspp/all.html>



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