

# Hedera helix

## COMMON NAMES

ivy

## BIOSTATUS

Exotic

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial climber with stems woody, stout, becoming erect at flowering, attaching to support with aerial rootlets. Leaves alternate, hairless, dark green or variegated ivory-white, variable shaped (usually shallowly lobed), 3-15 cm long (leaves on flowering stems usually not lobed). Flowers tiny, insignificant, yellowish-green, Mar-May. Berries 5-8 mm diam, purple to black, usually with low viability.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Not generally confused, but identifying to subspecies can be problematic, many different cultivars exist. Other Ivy species are easily separated. Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) is deciduous and foliage is often dark red. German ivy (*Senecio mikanioides*) has thin leaves and yellow flowers in the winter. Cape ivy (*Senecio angulatus*) has thick fleshy leaves and yellow flowers. Fragrant ivy (*Hedera colchica*) is sometimes cultivated, this species is very similar to *H. helix*, but young shoots are always green, and the leaves are often very large and fragrant when crushed.

## HABITAT

Terrestrial. Forest understorey, shrubland, rocky cliffs, open areas where there is some support for its scrambling habit.

## GENUS

*Hedera*

## FAMILY

Araliaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Hedera helix* L.

## SYNONYMS

*Hedera helix* L. subsp. *helix*

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

March, April, May



*Hedera helix* subsp. *helix*. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Street edge, Virginia Heights, Whanganui. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 23/04/2017, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## FRUITING

August, September, October, November, December

## YEAR NATURALISED

1873

## ORIGIN

temp. Europe, Asia

## REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental.

## TOLERANCES

Tolerant to deep shade, severe frosts and high to low moisture.

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial, long-lived and persists over time. Heteroblastic, with the lobed leaves and self-clinging stems juvenile. Adult foliage is usually produced in full sun and the leaves are more orbicular in shape and flowers and fruit are produced. Reproduces from seed. Ground trailing stems may also take root and a single node is capable of growing. Fruit is produced prolifically on mature stems. It is unclear at this stage whether subsp. canariensis produces fruit in NZ. Each fruit contains a 2-3 seeds. Fruit and seed dispersed by birds. also can spread extensively vegetatively, rooted stems can re-sprout after disturbance.

## ETYMOLOGY

**hedera:** From the ancient Latin name for ivy.

## ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

**This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC.** 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

## NVS CODE

HEDHEL

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/hedera-helix/>

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026