

HOME & GARDEN

Removing English Ivy from Trees Helps Avoid Costly, Painful Loss of Trees

Many large trees in Douglas Park are covered in English ivy, and this poses a real danger to these trees. Even though some people like the look of ivy hanging off trunks and branches, in fact English ivy is a non-native, invasive vine that weakens trees by keeping the bark damp and blocking sunlight.

Removing a mature tree is a very costly proposal, often running into thousands of dollars, so it's best to take some simple steps to protect the trees. To remove ivy from trees, cut off the vines at ground level then make another cut as high as you can reach. Peel this section of ivy off, but be careful not to strip the bark off the tree. The portion left growing in the tree will eventually die.

Other tips:

- Use a mower or weed wacker once a year to trim the portion left on the ground. Bag and dispose in the usual trash.
- Plant native vines such as trumpet honeysuckle, trumpet vine or Virginia creeper.

English ivy is also undesirable because it harbors slugs, mosquitoes and rats. The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service has helpful brochures about controlling English ivy and other invasive plants that are not native to our area. For copies call 703-228-6414. ✓



Looking Ahead

The popular Farmers' Market reopens May 5 at Pike Plaza in front of Eckerd Drugs, So. Walter Reed and Columbia Pike.

DISCOVERY

Flying Squirrels: Acrobats in our Midst

Some things can only be enjoyed in winter—flying squirrels, for instance. The Long Branch Nature Center, located off Carlin Springs Road near the Northern Virginia Doctors' Center, has a fantastic program on flying squirrels throughout the winter.

After a brief talk about the animals' habits and life cycle, visitors go outside to await the arrival of the local flying squirrels. These native, nocturnal rodents visit the Center's bird feeders just after sundown. They don't really fly, they glide. And they have been known to glide as far as 300 feet. They are really worth seeing.

Guides will even tell you how to find out if flying squirrels live in your backyard. Once warm weather comes, they no longer visit the feeders, so plan to see them soon.

The next programs take place Jan. 26 (adults and children 5 and older) and Feb. 2 (adults and teens). To make reservations (required), call 703-228-6535. ✓

Have you discovered an event or place in the area that you'd like to share with your neighbors? Write a brief description and e-mail: dmlceland@hotmail.com, or fax 202-962-3682.

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