

KENTUCKY'S 2002 LEAST WANTED PLANT

Promoting alternatives to invasive landscape plants

To heighten awareness of invasive plants that threaten Kentucky's native biodiversity, a **Least Wanted** plant will be featured in the Spring of each year with suggested alternatives.

Least Wanted!

Wintercreeper *Euonymus fortunei*

Wintercreeper was introduced to the U.S. from China in the early 1900s as a landscape plant. Popular as a groundcover because of its rapid growth and ability to tolerate a wide range of growing conditions, this species has become a threat to natural areas.

Wintercreeper spreads aggressively by lateral shoots; however, birds that feed on the fruits can carry the seed great distances. This species invades both disturbed and undisturbed forests, and once established it outcompetes the native understory vegetation. We are requesting the help of nursery owners, landscapers and gardeners to prevent further spread of this species by not using this species in gardens. Several alternatives are presented below.



photo by Paul Cappiello

Good Native Alternatives

Ginger *Asarum spp.*

Wild ginger, *Asarum canadense*, is native to Kentucky and can form a beautiful ground cover. It is a deciduous spreader with flat green leaves that spreads rather slowly. *Asarum europaeum*, an introduced species, forms a deep glossy evergreen ground cover and has not been found to be invasive. *Asarum shuttleworthii*, native to the southeast U.S., is a finer textured, evergreen clumping form, excellent for use in small garden areas. Most gingers grow best in moist, shady slightly acid soils.



photo by Thomas Barnes

Allegheny Spurge *Pachysandra procumbens*

Allegheny spurge is another native Kentucky species that forms a groundcover in shady conditions. Medium green leaves are mottled with white veins and are evergreen in warmer winters. Allegheny spurge will not produce a ground cover as quickly as Wintercreeper; however, this very attractive and underused species is worth the wait.

Mountain Lover or Cliff Green *Paxistima canbyi*

This Kentucky native is rare, but is now becoming more available through nurseries. A very fine-textured, low-growing, evergreen shrub to about 12" tall, Mountain Lover is appropriate for a ground cover in smaller areas as it is slower to establish. Mountain lover is found in dry, rocky woods in light shade.



photo by Julian Campbell

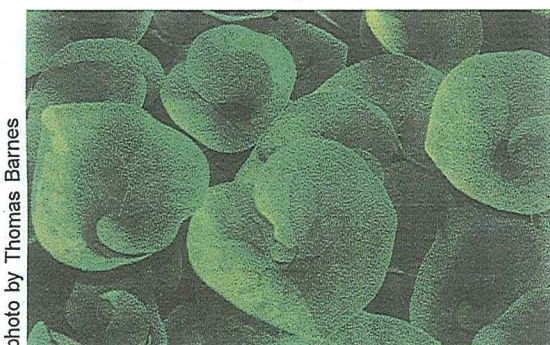


photo by Thomas Barnes



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