



# Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 322 N. Commercial St. Bellingham WA 98225  
(360) 715-7470 [www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/weeds](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/weeds)

## PERIWINKLE

*Vinca minor*

**THREAT:** Periwinkle, or vinca, is a native to Eurasia, introduced to North America as a garden plant, probably in the 1700s. It is currently on the Washington State Noxious Weed Board's Monitor List (non-regulatory). It escapes cultivation and can become invasive in forested understory and along shaded margins. The stems sprawl along the ground, producing a mat of vegetation that excludes most other plants. It grows best in partial shade, although can grow in deep shade, and tolerates poor soils. It spreads primarily by underground rhizomes, and stolons that root at the tips. Seed is sparsely produced.

**DESCRIPTION:** Periwinkle is a low, trailing, evergreen groundcover, growing up to 6 inches tall. The thin, wiry stems sprawl over the ground, and produce a milky sap when broken. The glossy dark green leaves are 1 to 2 inches long become leathery when they mature. The elliptical leaves are borne in an opposite arrangement along the stem. Most flowering occurs in the spring, but continues sporadically into the summer. The flowers are blue-purple, although reddish lavender or white flowers may be found in certain cultivars, and about 1 inch in diameter.



**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** Periwinkle can be controlled through manual, cultural and chemical methods. Small infestations can be pulled or dug, although control will need to be repeated, as resprouting will occur. Regular mowing may inhibit the plant but will not eradicate it. If this plant is used in a landscape, it should be planted in a contained area, such as one surrounded by concrete. Contact the weed board for site-specific chemical recommendations.



*Vinca minor* invades the understory in a natural area in Bellingham, WA