

# Ivy

*Hedera helix*

## What to look for

A common, evergreen climber

Also sprawls over the ground

Dark green, glossy leaves are three- or five-lobed, (like a maple leaf), on young stems

Leaves are heart-shaped on the flowering stems

The yellowish-green flowers are borne in small clusters



## Where found

Grows well almost anywhere throughout the UK – woodland, scrub, isolated trees, wasteland, walls and rocks

## When to look

Flowers in September and October

Ripe fruit in November to January

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### Did you know?

Ivy's late flowering season makes it a valuable source of nectar for many insects before they hibernate, particularly bees and butterflies

The berries provide many birds with abundant food supplies during the most severe months of winter, when little else is available to them

Holly blue butterflies lay eggs on ivy in the summer and on holly in the spring

As ground cover in woodland, ivy greatly lessens the effect of frost, enabling birds and woodland creatures to forage in leaf litter during bitter spells

Growing on trees, it provides hiding, roosting, hibernating and nesting places for various animals, birds and insects (including butterflies), particularly during the winter months and in areas where there are few other evergreens

Sheep, goats and deer like to browse on the leaves

Wearing a wreath of ivy leaves around the brow is supposed to prevent drunkenness

Regarded as the emblem of fidelity by the ancient Greeks, priests would present a wreath of ivy to newly married couples. Today it is still the custom for bridal bouquets to contain a sprig of ivy



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