

Winter Creeper



K. Langdon

VINES

***Euonymus fortunei* (Tursz.) Hand.-Maz. EUFO5**

Synonyms: climbing euonymus, gaitly

Plant. Evergreen woody vine climbing to 40 to 70 feet (12 to 22 m) and clinging by aerial roots or rooting at nodes, or standing as a shrub to 3 feet (1 m) in height. Leaves thick and dark green or green-white variegated on green stems. Pinkish-to-red capsules splitting open in fall to expose fleshy orange seeds.

Stem. Twigs stout, lime green, and hairless becoming increasingly dusted and streaked with light-gray reddish corky bark. Patches or lines of protruding aerial roots underneath or along surfaces used for attachment. Branches opposite, leaf scars thin upturned white crescents, and branch scars jutting and containing a light semicircle. Older stems covered with gray corky bark becoming fissured and then checked.

Leaves. Opposite broadly oval, moderately thick, with bases tapering to petiole. One to 2.5 inches (2.5 to 6 cm) long and 1 to 1.8 inches (2.5 to 4.5 cm) wide. Margins finely crenate, somewhat turned under, to wavy. Blades smooth glossy, hairless, dark green with whitish mid- and lateral veins (or variegated green white above and light green beneath). Petioles 0.15 to 0.4 inch (0.4 to 1 cm) long.

Flowers. May to July. Axillary clusters of small greenish-yellow inconspicuous flowers at the ends of Y-shaped stems, each flower 0.1 inch (2 to 3 mm) wide. Five petals. Pistils soon elongating with fruit.

Fruit and seeds. September to November. Dangling paired or single pinkish-to-red capsules, 0.2 to 0.4 inch (5 to 10 mm) long, splitting to reveal a fleshy orange-to-red covered seed.

Ecology. Forms dense ground cover and can climb trees eventually overtopping them. Shade tolerant occurring under dense stands but avoiding wet areas. Colonizes by trailing and climbing vines that root at nodes, and spreads by bird-, other animal-, and water-dispersed seeds.

Resembles the larger leaved species of blueberry, *Vaccinium* spp., but their leaves are alternate. **Possibly resembles** the opposite- and thick-leaved rusty blackhaw, *Viburnum rufidulum* Raf., which is distinguished by dark buds in each axil.

History and use. Introduced from Asia in 1907. Ornamental ground cover.

States with suspected infestations are shown in gray.

**Winter Creeper****3042**