

November 2021

**Ivy, *Hedera helix* L. from the Araliaceae family**

Ivy is an evergreen, perennial plant that grows both ground-covering and climbing. As a ground cover, the plant can develop either adventitious roots or, when climbing, adhesive roots on the above-ground parts of the plant. Ivy has the typical triangular to pentagonal, leathery leaves on the non-flowering branches. The flowering twigs bear lanceolate to rhombic leaves. The yellowish green flowers are arranged in spherical umbels. They provide a good source of nectar from September until late autumn. In winter the pea-sized fruits ripen into blue-black berries.

Ivy grows in forests, floodplain shrubs and quarries. It prefers shady to semishady locations.

Regarding its status as a medicinal plant the pharmaceutically interesting ingredients are triterpene saponins and polyacetylenes. The dried leaf is used. However, all parts of the plant are slightly poisonous, which is why only pharmaceutical preparations should be used.

In the garden, ivy is both popular and feared. As a tree climber, it can reach great heights with its adhesive roots. Smaller trees can be overgrown and die. In any case, the ivy does not extract nutrients from the tree via its adhesive roots, these only serve to hold the tree in place.

As a façade greening, ivy has some positive properties. The plant insulates, is a habitat for insects and birds and has an air-purifying effect. However, ivy should only be considered for intact facades. It also needs regular pruning especially when it reaches the roof -it can easily lift roof tiles.

