

## *Vinca major* L.

(Bigleaf periwinkle )



Chris Evans, The University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

**Family:** Apocynaceae (Dogbane Family)

**Synonym(s):** *Vinca major* var. *variegata*

**Duration:** Perennial

**Habit:** Subshrub

**Description:** Evergreen to semievergreen vines, somewhat woody, trailing or scrambling to 3 feet (1 m) long and upright to 1 foot (30 cm). Violet pinwheel-shaped flowers.

**History:** Introduced from Europe in 1700s. Ornamental ground cover, commonly sold and planted by gardeners

**Biology & Spread:** Floating vegetation/debris: High flood waters carry plant fragments downstream

For ornamental purposes: *V. major* is commonly sold as an ornamental.

Landscape/fauna "improvement": *V. major* is planted as an ornamental ground cover.

Other: *V. major* is introduced to new locations as a medicinal herb.

Garden escape/garden waste: The most common means of spread is by vegetative material being dumped in garden refuse.

On animals (local): Seed dispersal by wind has been recorded in warmer climates.

**Ecological Threat:** *V. major* forms dense stands that exclude other herbs and creates a problem in areas where it competes with native herbs. This species is a particular threat to the understory of riverine vegetation as it will spread from plant fragments carried by high flows. *V. major* forms dense mats which smother all native groundcover vegetation and prevent regeneration of trees and shrubs. This can have important long term consequences on streambanks, where the eventual loss of native tree and shrub cover could lead to erosion.

**US Habitat:** Found around old homesite plantings and scattered in open to dense canopied forests. Form mats and extensive infestations even under forest canopies by vines rooting at nodes, with viability of seeds yet to be reported.

### **Distribution**

US Nativity: Introduced to U.S.

Native Origin: Europe & W. Asia (Alfred Rehder, Manual of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs: Hardy in North America, The MacMillan Co., New York (1967)); NatureServe Explorer

