

VIRGINIA CREEPER

Parthenocissus quinquefolia

(L.) Planch.

Plant Symbol = PAQU2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program



Robert H. Mohlenbrock
USDA NRCS 1991
Southern Wetland Flora
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Uses

Erosion Control: Although Virginia creeper has a rather open canopy structure, with its energetic growth and aboveground rooting and sprouting habits this species can be useful groundcover for erosion control and watershed protection, particularly in shaded areas.

Restoration: Virginia creeper is a native component of eastern climax forests.

Wildlife: Virginia creeper provides cover for many small birds and mammals. Songbirds are the principle consumers of the fruit, however deer, gamebirds and small mammals will also feed on them. Cattle and deer will sometimes browse on the foliage.

Other: Virginia creeper is often cultivated as an ornamental because of its attractive foliage. The bark has been used in domestic medicines as a tonic, expectorant and remedy for dropsy.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's

current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

Virginia creeper is a native, woody, deciduous vine that climbs to a height of 60 feet on trees, poles or other structures, or forms a blanket of foliage up to 12 inches high along the ground. Stems are orange brown, finely hairy with branched tendrils that end in adhesive discs. The leaves are alternate and compound with 5, or rarely 3, leaflets that turn bright red in autumn. The leaflets are pointed, coarse-toothed and grow to 6 inches long. Inconspicuous green flowers borne in clusters during the spring are followed by a cluster of ¼-inch bluish black berries. There are 12,000 to 19,000 seeds per pound.

Adaptation and Distribution

Virginia creeper is found throughout the eastern half of the United States. It prefers moist, well-drained soils but will grow in drier soils and conditions including coastal dune areas. Virginia creeper is fairly shade tolerant, however it is often found along more open clearing borders, fencerows and streambanks. It is also salt tolerant.

For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

Establishment

Seeds should be drilled 3/8 inches deep in the fall or, preferably, in the spring after stratification. Virginia creeper can also be propagated from hardwood cuttings or layering. Literature suggests germination rates vary between 20 and 50% with optimum density for erosion protection at 10 plants per square foot. For restoration, partial cover, and wildlife plantings, it is often planted other species at densities of 1 plant or less per square foot.

Management

As Virginia creeper will grow in low fertility and droughty conditions maintenance for this species is minimal.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

'Engelmanni' and 'Monham.'

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Edited: 05Feb2002 JLK; 060802.jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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