
SUNNYSIDE THYMES

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“Helping Others Grow”

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SMG's Grow Native!

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You've cleaned out the invasive Wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*) from your planting beds. Wintercreeper is commonly used as a ground cover - it is easy to grow and does well in sun and shade with minimal maintenance, but what do you plant instead?

A possible replacement plant for Wintercreeper that is recommended by the Indiana Native Plant Society is Allegheny Spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*). Allegheny Spurge is a shrubby ground cover which grows 8"-12" high and spreads via rhizomes. It forms a dense growth of matte blue-green leaves mottled with purple and white. It is native in Kentucky and Indiana woodlands. The leaves are ovate, coarsely toothed toward the outer apex but smooth at the base. Allegheny Spurge is evergreen in zones 5 and 6, although the leaves will likely look worn by mid-winter. Very small white flowers appear before new growth in the spring. The plants grow in shade to part-shade in average soil and are drought tolerant. The plants are propagated through root division or softwood cuttings in the spring.

The picture shows Allegheny Spurge growing in the Woodland Garden in Broad Run Park in Eastern Jefferson County, Kentucky. You can easily discern the toothed outer edges of the leaves with a smooth base. Despite a heavy leaf cover, clumps of Allegheny are very visible.

If Allegheny Spurge doesn't meet your landscape needs, two other alternative plants for Wintercreeper suggested by the Indiana Invasive Plant Council are Wild Ginger (*Asarum Canadense*) and Golden Ragwort (*Packera aureus*). I have not been

successful in growing Wild Ginger and know little about Golden Ragwort. However, based on my research, both do well in moist areas which many of us do not have. If you think they might work for you, the Missouri Botanical Garden web site has good information about the growing habitats for both alternatives.



Photo: Jane Jones

References:

- <https://growindiananatives.org/invasive-plants/top-ten-plants-to-avoid-and-alternatives/>
- <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=e692>
- https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=papr7