**Euonymus fortunei** - Euonymus or Wintercreeper Euonymus

*Euonymus fortunei* is a variable growth habit species (small shrub to groundcover form). Wintercreeper Euonymus is usually found in variegated shrub form and utilized as a broadleaf evergreen accent for foundations, edgings, or group plantings.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- usually a small-sized, broadleaf evergreen, ornamental shrub, maturing at 2-4' tall x 2-5' wide (depending upon cultivar)
- the var. *coloratus* is a broadleaf semi-evergreen woody groundcover, to 1' tall when not near a supportive structure
- upright clump to spreading clump growth habit for shrub form cultivars, and a procumbent mat growth habit for the groundcover var. *coloratus*
- medium growth rate for both forms, slowing with maturity unless frequently pruned

**Culture**
- full sun to partial shade (with the variegated forms performing best in partial sun to partial shade)
- tolerates poor soils, various soil pHs, soil compaction, heat, drought, shearing, and pollution, and is therefore urban tolerant
- propagated primarily by rooted stem cuttings
- possible damage from crown gall disease and euonymus scale pest
- abundantly available in containers
- rejuvenation shearing in early spring for the variegated shrub forms will keep their rapid growth in-bounds and result in more vibrant variegated foliage

**Foliage**
- evergreen to semi-evergreen, medium to dark green leaves are moderately shiny, with virtually no petiole
- opposite, elliptical, and finely serrated to crenate on the margins, ranging from 1-3" long, depending upon cultivar
- autumn color is variable, becoming distinctly red-purple-bronzed for the solid green-foliaged groundcover var. *coloratus*, but having hues of dull gray-green or pink in addition to the persistent but faded variegation for the shrub forms, depending upon cultivar; leaves persist throughout autumn and some may slowly abscise during winter, especially on the groundcover form

**Flowers**
- cream-yellow or lime-colored flowers bloom in June or July, but are usually not present or are ornamentally insignificant

**Fruits**
- dehiscent capsules; inconspicuous, if present at all

**Twigs**
- usually medium green with a hint of corkiness, changing to tan with age
- stems, when placed next to a climbable structure (e.g., block or brick foundation, chain-link fence, tall wooden timbers, etc.) will clasp to it and take on a short clingling vine stature
- not applicable

**Trunk**

**USAGE**

**Function**
- foundation, specimen, facer, low hedge, edging, or group or mass planting shrub
- mass planting groundcover (if var. *coloratus*)

**Texture**
- medium texture in foliage
- thick density in foliage

**Assets**
- many variegated shrub forms, and one prominently-used groundcover form
- evergreen to semi-evergreen broadleaf character, often either variegated (shrubs) or winter-bronzing (groundcover)
- urban stress tolerant

**Liabilities**
- very prone to euonymus scale (often slowly lethal unless the insect infestation is treated with pesticides and/or dormant oil, and always unsightly), with a secondary infection of gray mildew occuring in extreme cases
- both shrub and groundcover forms retain blown leaves due to the numerous low, upright stems and retentive foliage

**Habitat**
- Zones 5 to 9
- Native to China

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- evergreen groundcovers (*Hedera helix, Liriope spicata, Lysimachia nummularia, Vinca minor, etc.*) or broadleaf evergreen shrubs (*Ilex glabra, Ilex × meserveae, Mahonia aquifolium, etc.*)

**Cultivars – Variants – Related species**
- an abundance of cultivars exist, selected for growth habit or variegation; only the most common are noted below:

*Euonymus fortunei* var. *coloratus* - Purple
Wintercreeper - probably the most common broadleaf evergreen trailing groundcover after English Ivy (*Hedera helix*), becoming intensely burgundy-purple in winter (bronzing), often found in raised planters, along sidewalks, or at foundations, where it may also partially climb walls as a clinging vine for several feet in height; otherwise growing to 1’ high as a dense entangled groundcover mat; mulch upon transplanting the plugs to achieve weed control and to prevent freeze heaving of the shallowly rooted transplants during the ensuing winter; several selections of this form are being sold under the same cultivar name in the nursery industry

- *E. fortunei* 'Emerald Gaiety' - a shrub to 4' x 6' if unpruned, but often sheared to contain its vigorous vertical as well as spreading habit, with emerald leaves that have a white to creamy margin; popular
- *E. fortunei* 'Emerald 'n Gold' (right)
- *E. fortunei* 'Emerald Gaiety' except that it has emerald leaves surrounded by a striking gold to yellow leaf margin; also very popular
- *E. fortunei* 'Sun Spot' - a shrub with a golden-yellow stripe down the midrib of each dark-green leaf; new stems also yellow, has a sprawling habit and slowly matures to 3' x 6