

Vinca minor - Myrtle, Creeping Myrtle, Periwinkle, or Vinca (Apocynaceae)

Vinca minor is a good, evergreen groundcover in partial shade with small, spring, blue-purple flowers.

FEATURES

Form

- short evergreen perennial groundcover
- maturing at about 6" tall x up to 3' in diameter for each individual plant
- trailing mat, prostrate mat, or mounding mat growth habit
- medium growth rate

Culture

- partial sun to full shade
- performs best in rich, evenly moist, well-drained soils in partial shade, but is adaptable to soils of average fertility, soils of various pH, and occasional drought (once established), but is not tolerant of full sun (which quickly leads to decreased vigor and chlorotic foliage)
- propagated primarily by rooted stem cuttings but also by crown division
- Dogbane Family, with vinca stem blight (*Phomopsis livella*) as a noticeable disease that occurs under constantly moist to wet conditions; it is a fungus that, although usually not life-threatening or causing large patches of the groundcover to die out, girdles a stem at its base and causes the stem and its foliage to turn black and brown as they die
- abundantly available in flats (as rooted plugs, in cell packs or peat pots), or in container form
- plant the plugs of groundcover about 1' apart, mulch at transplanting, and keep the planting evenly watered for the first season of establishment, to promote rooting-in of the plug and adventitious rooting at the nodes of the trailing stems

Foliage

- opposite along the thin stems, but clustered at stem terminals
- evergreen, elliptic, and entire, being lustrous dark green above with a subtle white mid-vein
- cultivars exist that have creamy-white, silvery-white, gold, or yellow variegation of the foliage

Flowers

- blue-purple is the predominate color, but cultivars also exist that are reddish-lavender or white
- solitary flowers originate from the leaf axils, composed of 5, fused, pinwheel-like petals and a short tubular throat, blooming in late Mar.-Apr. and sporadically throughout the growing season, often



sparsely arranged along the stems but sometimes densely flowering in spring

Fruits

- brown, minute, and ornamentally inconspicuous

Twigs

- light green and very slender, with green winter buds that are very small

Trunk

- not applicable

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Function

- evergreen groundcover in shady locations at foundations, beds, raised planters, or under woody plants

Texture

- fine texture
- thick density

Assets

- evergreen groundcover
- has sparse but attractive spring blossoms (rare for an evergreen groundcover)

Liabilities

- can become invasive beyond its intended boundaries (even into lawn areas) by its trailing and shallowly-rooting stems
- vinca stem blight will cause death of individual stems, with the resulting persistent brown foliage scattered among the living groundcover
- retains some blown leaves and debris in autumn and winter
- declines and becomes chlorotic when improperly placed in full sun

Habitat

- Zones 3 to 8
- Native to Europe and Western Asia

SELECTIONS

Alternates

- evergreen "viney" groundcovers (*Euonymus fortunei* var. *coloratus*, *Hedera helix*, *Liriope spicata*, *Pachysandra terminalis*, etc.) or evergreen woody groundcovers (*Juniperus conferta*, *Juniperus horizontalis*, *Juniperus procumbens*, *Microbiota decussata*, etc.)

Cultivars – Variants – Related species

- V. minor* 'Alba' - white-flowering form
- 'Atropurpurea' - reddish lavender to red-violet flowers
- V. minor* 'La Grave' ('Bowlesii') - has larger foliage that tends to mound instead of creep or trail, and flowers that are slightly larger and more dense with an intense blue or purple color; the standard and most common form available
- V. minor* 'Ralph Shugert' - leaf margins are sharply defined by a creamy-white variegation, with blue-purple blossoms