

## **The common periwinkle**

(*Vinca minor*)



The common periwinkle plant (*Vinca minor*) is often spotted creeping down steep hillsides and banks, offering a green and growing effect in areas which might otherwise be bare. The periwinkle plant is exceptional as an erosion control specimen.

Periwinkle may often be called creeping vinca or creeping myrtle as well. Periwinkle is most often grown as a groundcover.

The periwinkle plant takes its common name from the attractive blooms that dot the foliage in April to May, appearing in the colour of periwinkle blue. More than 30 varieties of this plant exist, some with variegated foliage and other bloom colours. This broad-leaf evergreen plant grows easily, and periwinkle care most often involves keeping the prolific spreader in check.

Periwinkle, once established, is drought resistant and needs little care if properly sited in the landscape. The periwinkle plant grows best in a partially shaded area in acidic soil; however, it can thrive in a variety of sunlight and soil conditions.

**Lesser Periwinkle** is a non-native invasive perennial plant of the UK, typically found growing in woodland, hedgerows and waste ground, to a mature height of up to 15cm.

Lesser Periwinkle, and the related larger Greater Periwinkle, are grown as garden plants and exists in the wild as garden escapes. Lesser Periwinkle is distinguished from Greater Periwinkle by having: smaller flowers; smaller, narrower and more elongated leaves; and smooth edges to the leaves. It is also less invasive.

**Concerns:** Lesser Periwinkle can tolerate shade and poor soil to outcompete native plants and reduce species diversity. The plant is poisonous to cats, dogs and horses.

**Benefits:** Periwinkle contains several different Vinca alkaloids which have been found to be effective in chemotherapy for a range of cancers. They act by blocking the rapid cell division associated with cancer.