

# UPSTATE

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## TREES COALITION

# 'De-Viner' helps eliminate ivy

By Daniel J. Gross  
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A local group has come up with a new way to keep English ivy from invading and damaging a natural habitat.

The "De-Viner" is a metal yard tool that the Trees Coalition came up with and has been using for about three months.

The tool has been through about five iterations since the first one was crafted, and a new design is in the works now to make the device even more effective.

Trees Coalition President and Chairman Newt Hardie came

up with the idea a few months ago when he wanted to provide his volunteers with something handy and useful to remove English ivy, which is a non-native invasive plant that can harm native trees and plants.

The welded metal tool is about three feet long with curved metal spikes on one end and a handle on the other end.

The design allows someone to stick the tool in the ground and begin to turn it clockwise so that an ivy patch is pulled up easily. Once the patch's vines are removed, the thicker



The "De-Viner" is a tool designed by the Trees Coalition in Spartanburg that helps volunteers more easily remove invasive English ivy. ALEX HICKS JR./ALEX.HICKS@SHJ.COM

SEE DE-VINER, C3

## DE-VINER

From Page C1

vines that have embedded themselves in the ground underneath can be easily seen and cut or pulled.

"Otherwise you're just scratching around," Hardie said.

At one point, the coalition thought about patenting the product, but decided against it.

"We decided anything we developed we want to spread it, we want to help the world be more effective. So we decided not to patent it," Hardie said.

The Trees Coalition, formerly the Kudzu Coalition, was founded as a nonprofit in 2004 to educate communities about tree care and to remove invasive plants.

Black Ezell, a Trees Coalition volunteer, used the De-Viner on Friday to pull up vines surrounding a mature tree along a nature trail at Mary Black Hospital.

Ezell said the tool allows volunteers who are not used to being on their hands and knees for yard work to remove ivy while standing up.

"English ivy, having been in all this stuff, it's a reality no matter how old you are, so it's all about adapting to it," Ezell said.

The ivy can be harmful to mature trees if not removed over time.

"There's something about it. You can almost hear the tree breathe again," Ezell said, after removing climbing ivy from some tree bark.

The De-Viners are manufactured by Pressley Machine Works on Union Street in Spartanburg.

Owner Roddy Jeffers said he's willing to manufacture any product whenever someone comes to him with an idea. He said Keo Philavanh, his welder, has been the one creating the De-Viners.

"We do about any kind of odd job that comes in the door," Jeffers said. "We've done all of Newt's revisions. He does them right-handed, left-handed, tall and short. Newt's always got a good idea to improve on something."

The new design being worked on now will be smaller to allow someone to kneel on the ground and pull up ivy.

Hardie said the De-Viners continue to be an asset to the regular volunteer groups that meet in Spartanburg to remove ivy and other invasive plants.

— Follow Daniel J. Gross on Twitter @danieljgross

Added after publication: The Trees Coalition prefers the word "remove" instead of "eliminate". The tool merely helps – it is not a silver bullet. It is not useful for removing ivy growing up trees. We would be delighted to show you the de-vider during our 9 to 11 am "ivy parties" at Hatcher Garden in Spartanburg every Wednesday morning.