LEAFY SPURGE

Prohibited - Control

Euphorbia esula L.

Common Names

Spurge, Wolf's Milk

Life Cycle Herbaceous peren

Herbaceous perennial

Native Range

Eurasia

Look-a-Likes

Cypress spurge <u>Yellow rocket (pg 70)</u>

Habitat

Dry sites in full sun, but tolerance of a range of conditions allows them to invade moist, rich soils as well.

Means of Spread

Produces seed that explodes from the seedpods and can travel up to 20 feet. The seed is durable and can remain viable up to 10 years. Reproduction can be vegetative from buds on roots, rhizomes and root cuttings.

Toxicity

Milky sap is toxic to cattle and horses. Contact with human skin can cause rashes.



Identification

Plant - Herbaceous, perennial to 3 feet tall. Broken stems of many *Euphorbia* spp. produce a milky sap (latex).

Leaves - Alternate, linear to lance-like, bluish-green and 1 to 4 inches in length.

Flower - There are no petals or sepals on the small yellowish-green flowers. Upper stem leaves or bracts develop just below flowers and are yellow-green in color providing the appearance of yellowish petaled flowers. The bracts develop before the true flowers.

Bloom Time - May to August

Seed and Fruit - Three-celled capsules that expel seeds up to 20 feet. Each cell contains a seed.

Root - Deep roots to 21 feet with extensive horizontal roots allow plants to store vast reserves.

Management

Appropriate protective clothing including gloves and long sleeves should be worn.

Mechanical - Cutting or mowing if timed before flower development can reduce or limit seed production.

Chemical - Repeated herbicide applications during the early spring and autumn can effectively reduce spurge.

Cultural - Grazing goats and sheep can effectively limit the spread of infestations.

Biological - Biological control agents are available for controlling leafy spurge. Flea beetles (*Aphthona lacertosa*) are widely used in Minnesota. Flea beetles are collected late May to early June and released. Stem and root boring beetles (*Oberea erythrocephala*) provide some control.









Below: Aphthona lacertosa.





Fire - Early spring prescribed fire is compatible with biological control.

Effective herbicide formulations: 2,4-D, aminocyclopyrachlor, dicamba, glyphosate, imazapic, picloram.