

New Invaders Watch Program

Early Detection and Rapid Response Network

COMMON NAME: **LEAFY SPURGE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Euphorbia esula*

FAMILY: *Euphorbiaceae*

ORIGIN: Eurasia

US INTRODUCTION: Early 1800's in contaminated seed

MAJOR PATHWAYS OF SPREAD:

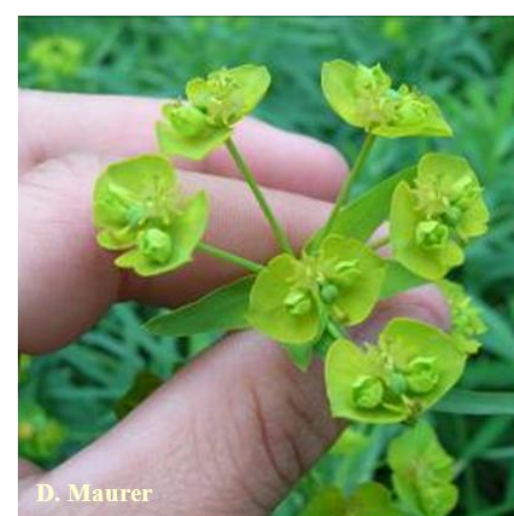
- Contaminated hay, gravel, and soil
- Mowing during seed set

IDENTIFICATION CHARACTERISTICS:

- Perennial herb, flower bracts very visible from May through mid-June, seeds produced in July, spreads by seed and vegetatively
- Flowers are inconspicuous, borne by paired, yellowish green, cup-shaped bracts, paired bracts are in clusters of seven to ten at top of stem branches
- Fruits and seeds contained in center of paired bracts, explosive dehiscence projects seeds up to 15 feet
- Leaves alternate, narrow, lanceolate-oblong with pointy tips; smooth leaves produce milky sap
- Stems erect, tough and woody, 4-39 inches tall with milky sap
- Threatens prairies, savannas, pastures; moist to dry soils, partial to full sun



Whole plant



Close-up of flowers and bracts



Milky sap



Stem in the fall



Roots and rhizome

NATIVE LOOK-ALIKES:

Flowing spurge (*E. corollata*), native, has white bracts. Seaside spurge (*E. polygonifolia*), native, has opposite to sub-opposite leaves and grows prostrate on sand surface. Exotic cypress spurge, cemetery spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias*) grows shorter and leaves are smaller than leafy spurge.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Alien Plant Working Group Fact Sheet.
<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/eues1.htm>

USDA Team Leafy spurge.
<http://www.team.ars.usda.gov/v2/leafyspurge.html>

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialplants/herbaceous/leafyspurge.html>



cypress spurge