

Leafy Spurge

Euphorbia esula

Description: Leafy spurge is a perennial with an abundant and extensive root system. The mature plant will reach up to 2 to 3 1/2 feet on a smooth stem. Leaves, stem, and flowers have a milky sap. Leaves are long and lance-shaped on the upper stem and scale-like on the lower stem. Flowers are small and yellow and open up in late June. They grow in cluster of 7-10.

Ecological Threat: Leafy spurge rapidly invades disturbed areas like road ditches. It can quickly displace native plants in moist and dry prairies and is tolerant of a wide range of light and moisture conditions. It is most aggressive in dry sites where there is less competition from native plants.

Control Methods: Mechanical-mechanical removal is difficult because of the extensive root system.

Chemical-prescribed burning followed by herbicide treatment or spot treatment in September or October when native plants are dormant and leafy spurge is still active.

Biological- grazing goats can weaken the plant, and a root-boring beetle, four root-mining beetles, and a shoot-tip gall midge can help control it.

