

Myrtle spurge and Cypress spurge

Euphorbiaceae

Euphorbia myrsinites
Euphorbia cyparissias


Myrtle spurge

- Origin:** Europe and Asia. Escaped ornamental
- Description:** 8 to 12 inches tall and 12 to 18 inches wide. Reproduces by seed and roots (including fragments)
- Color:** Light green to blue-green leaves and yellowish-green flowers
- Roots:** Brown roots grow out of a central taproot
- Stems:** 12 to 18 inches long growing close to the ground
- Leaves:** Alternate, stiff, triangular and ½ to 1 inch wide. Thick, blue-green, fleshy and closely spiraled on the stem
- Flowers:** Small, yellowish-green enclosed by yellowish-green bracts. March thru May
- Seeds:** Thousands of seeds explode from three-sided seed capsules that are projected up to 15 feet away
- Viability:** 8 years
- Toxicity:** Plants contain a milky sap which can cause skin irritation and blistering. Causes nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea if ingested



Cypress spurge

- Origin:** Europe. Escaped ornamental
- Description:** Up to 18 inches tall. Reproduces by seed and lateral root buds
- Color:** Light green to green leaves with yellowish-green flowers
- Roots:** Taproot to 10 feet deep and lateral buds producing new shoots along their length
- Stems:** Smooth, erect, slender and branched towards their upper end
- Leaves:** Linear, narrow and up to 1.5 inches long
- Flowers:** Yellowish-green, ½ inch wide with 2 heart-shaped bracts. At tip of main stem and upper branches. April-August
- Seeds:** 30 to 900 seeds per plant
- Viability:** 8 years
- Toxicity:** The plant's milky sap is an irritant and may cause dermatitis or rashes. Although sheep may eat it, the plant is toxic to horses and cattle



Myrtle spurge has adapted to rocky, sandy soils and xeric climates while cypress spurge can infest woodlands, pastures and roadsides.

Where they become established, they crowd out native vegetation. Their competitive, rapidly growing, and extensive root system makes them difficult to kill completely, as new shoots can sprout from broken root fragments.

If you have any questions, please contact the Weld County Public Works Dept., Weed Division at (970) 400-3770 or visit <https://www.weldweeds.org>

On the backside of this sheet are management recommendations.

Myrtle spurge and cypress spurge are State of Colorado “A” List noxious weeds.
This means these plants must be eradicated from any and all properties in Colorado.

Once eliminated, seed and rootstock that will propagate new plants may still be in the ground.
Therefore, spurge sites must be periodically monitored for new growth, and again treated.

Recommended range and pasture management methods:

Cultural

Seeding and maintaining aggressive grasses will help in competing with myrtle spurge and slow its spread.

Contact your local CSU Extension office or Natural Resources Conservation Service office for seed mix recommendations. Bare spots caused by disturbance or bad soil are prime habitat for weed infestations.

The most effective method to prevent escape is to remove garden specimens and encourage neighbors to do the same.

Alternative plants - Sedums, hen and chicks, moss rose (*Portulaca grandiflora*), alyssum and phlox are safe alternatives. *Many more choices can be found at these websites:*

CSU Cooperative Extension – Horticulture - “Xeriscaping: Ground Cover Plants”

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/xeriscaping-ground-cover-plants-7-230/>

Colorado Native Plant Society – “Suggested Native Plants For Use on the Front Range of Colorado”

https://conps.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Suggested-Native-Plants_0408.pdf

Mechanical

Hand-pulling this plant is the easiest way to control small populations.

Wear gloves whenever handling this plant and monitor the area to spot and remove reoccurring shoots.

Biological

As a mandatory A list species for eradication, there is no biological control at this time

Herbicides

Products containing 2,4-D or dicamba may also be effective.

The following recommendations can be applied to range and pasturelands.

<u>Herbicide</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Application Timing</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Roundup (glyphosate) Non-selective	2-3 qts/acre or 2-3 oz/gal water	Apply when plants are actively growing.	Do not let spray drift to non-target species. Will kill all vegetation.

ALWAYS READ, UNDERSTAND, AND FOLLOW HERBICIDE LABEL DIRECTIONS

The herbicide label is the LAW