



# LEAFY SPURGE

(*Euphorbia esula*)

**WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?** Leafy spurge is an aggressive perennial weed that can grow to 3 feet tall and up to 20 feet deep. It has bluish-green narrow leaves and showy yellowish green, heart-shaped leaves which surround a small flower. Stems and leaves ooze a milky latex sap when broken. This sap can seriously irritate the skin of people and animals, and can cause human blindness if rubbed into the eye.

**WHERE DOES IT GROW?** It can be found in any type of soil and is commonly found in rangeland, pastures, roadsides, waste areas and wetland sites. Although leafy spurge grows best in unmanaged sites, it will invade cultivated sites as well.

**WHEN DOES IT BLOOM?** Flowering begins in May and continues into the fall. It's seed capsules open explosively, shooting the seed up to 15 feet from the parent plant or can be carried further by water and wildlife. Each flowering shoot produces an average of 140 seeds. The seeds can live in the soil for up to 8 years before germination. The roots can grow sideways and spread several feet per year, developing buds which will produce many more plants.

**HOW DO I CONTROL IT?** Successful management of leafy spurge requires the use of a combination of methods. The roots contain many buds that can produce new shoots if the upper leaves and stem are destroyed. The key to control leafy spurge is to exhaust the food storage in the root, causing it to collapse. Constant control is necessary during the growing season.

## NON-CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- Encourage desirable grasses to grow by fertilizing and watering. Healthy grasses will fill in bare spots and help prevent leafy spurge from getting started.
- Mowing will reduce seed production but will not kill the plant.
- Grazing by sheep and goats has been shown to control leafy spurge top growth. Grazing alone will not kill leafy spurge but will reduce the infestation, slow the spread of the weed and allow grasses to be grazed by cattle and horses. Grazing can be started early in the spring when the plant first emerges.
- Several bio-control insects are currently at work on leafy spurge in North Idaho. One is *Apththona lacertosa* - the brown-legged spurge flea beetle. Larvae bore into the roots while the adults feed on the leaves.

## CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- Proper timing of herbicide application is very important. Spring or fall applications using 2,4-D or dicamba + 2,4-D are most effective when flowers emerge.
- Glyphosate (Roundup, Eraser, etc.) is most effective when applied on a monthly basis starting in June. Remember that glyphosate will also kill grasses.
- For more information please contact:

**Kootenai County Noxious Weed Control**

**10905 N. Ramsey Road**

**Hayden, ID 83835**

**208-446-1290 / TTY 208-446-2145**

**kcnoxiousweeds@kcgov.us or [www.kcweeds.com](http://www.kcweeds.com)**



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