

Cypress spurge

Euphorbia cyparissias

Description

Introduced to North America as an ornamental plant in the 1860s; widely planted in cemeteries and often called "graveyard weed".

Habit

Erect, herbaceous to semi-woody perennial; grows 6-12 in in height.

Leaves

Numerous, bright green in color, linear in nature, alternate along the stem and in whorls where they subtend the inflorescence; 0.4-1 in long and 0.04-0.1 in wide.

Stems

Erect, semi-woody.

Flowers

Bright yellow-green in color that turn to purple-red as they mature, clustered at the top of plant, the true flowers are small and lack sepals or petals; blooms in May through August.





Fruits and Seeds

The fruit is three lobed and contains 1-3 egg shaped smooth gray seeds; fruits are explosive capsules that split open when mature and throw seed to over 16 ft.

Habitat

Native to Eurasia. Found in meadows, pastures, road edges, cemeteries, right-of-ways, dunes, pannes, coastal headlands, grasslands and calcareous glades. Prefers dry to moist sandy, gravelly or calcareous soils.

Reproduction

Vegetatively through lateral root buds, forming extensive clonal populations; the taproot may reach lengths of approximately 10 ft and give rise to lateral roots, which produce adventitious buds.

Similar

Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*).

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Manual control can be difficult due to extensive root system; effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate; There are eleven species of European insects (Five chrysomelid beetles in the genus *Aphthona* and one cecidomyiid fly gall midge, *Spurgia esulae* Gagne) which have been effective control.

Credits

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