

## Leafy spurge

### *Euphorbia virgata*

#### Description

This species is listed as a prohibited noxious weed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture; deep taproot, up to 4.5 m (15 ft) deep; tough, woody extensive root system may extend up to 10 m (33 ft); large root reserves allow plant to recover from most disturbances.

#### Habit

Herbaceous perennial ranging in height from 15-92 cm (6-36 in); root system can extend up to 6 m (~20 ft).

#### Leaves

Simple, alternate, long, narrow, bluish green in color, usually pointed and drooping with smooth margins, exude white milky sap when crushed.

#### Stems



Upright stems that branch towards the top of the plant; dry stems may persist into the winter and following summer; stems also release white, milky sap when broken.

### **Flowers**

Small, yellowish-green in color, fused petals form a cuplike structure; blooms mid-June through late-July.

### **Fruits and Seeds**

Smooth, oblong, gray-brown seeds in explosive capsules; one plant can produce up to 200 seeds; high germination rate; viable up to 8 years with adequate moisture.

### **Habitat**

Roadsides, prairies, savannas, gravel pits, open areas.

### **Reproduction**

By seed. Also spreads rapidly though its persistent root system from crown and root buds that over-winter under the soil surface.

### **Similar**

Flowering spurge (*Euphorbia corollata*) has white flowers and erect leaves; non-native Cypress spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias*) has stem leaf blades less than 2.5 mm wide.

### **Monitoring and Rapid Response**

Monitor open sites and woodland edges, early detection is critical. Leafs out early in spring; bright

yellow-green bracts appear in late May or early June. Seedlings develop buds within 7-10 days of emergence. Long shoots spread laterally; pulling, digging, burning and tilling may cause them to increase. Foliar herbicide treatment provides effective control of small occurrences. Surveillance and control efforts needed for 5-10 years.

### **Credits**

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