

Have You Heard About Leafy Spurge?



Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) is a serious pest in the grasslands of the Great Plains and is a threat to the upper Midwest, including Illinois. In Montana, the Dakotas and Wyoming alone, Leafy spurge costs tax payers more than \$144 million a year in production losses, control expenses and other impacts. **Leafy spurge, a long-lived perennial plant, produces a milky sap that is poisonous to horses and livestock, causing blistering and sores in the mouth and throat when consumed. The sap can also irritate human skin.** Leafy spurge grows in open, sunny places, tolerating damp to dry soils. It spreads in pastures, turf grass, prairies, savannas, and along roadsides. Although relatively uncommon in Lake and McHenry Counties, **Leafy spurge is beginning to spread our area.** It reproduces by seeds and roots (including root fragments) and seed lingering in the soil can germinate for several years. Leafy spurge is easily spread by people through contaminated hay or feed, mowing (when seed is present or roots are fragmented), and in soils, gravel or other material excavated from areas where Leafy spurge grows. Early detection of small populations will reduce the spread of Leafy spurge in our area –

and the need for costly control measures in the future. **Identification:** Leafy spurge grows from April to October. Flowering from early May to late June, the flat-topped cluster of yellowish-green flowers is easily identified. Seed begins to develop in early July. Leafy spurge has numerous narrow, smooth leaves along the stem, and grows up to 24 inches. Plants turn orange in October before winter die-back. Generally, there are several non-flowering plants scattered around patches of flowering Leafy spurge. Control is possible, but requires several years of mowing, herbiciding, and or grazing. Your local Cooperative Weed Management Area can help you develop an effective control plan.



Leafy spurge flower head



Flower w/ seed capsule



Milky sap (D. Eagan, Univ. WI-Madison)



Fall color

If you find Leafy spurge in your area, please let us know!

In McHenry, IL call 815-675-2386 x 321
In Lake County, IL call 847-968-3285

Thank You for helping prevent the spread of Leafy spurge!

Prepared by the Lake and McHenry County Cooperative Weed Management Area

For more information on Leafy spurge, visit: <http://www.team.ars.usda.gov/> or <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/weedcontrol/leafyspurge.html>