

Myrtle Spurge: Options for Control

Myrtle spurge (*Euphorbia myrsinites*), a class-B non designate noxious weed in Lincoln County, Washington *also known as creeping spurge or donkey tail*, and is a succulent species of spurges (family Euphorbiaceae). Introduced here from the Mediterranean region, it is a perennial forb. It prefers full sun, well drained soil and is found in gardens, natural areas and rocky slopes. Myrtle spurge was added to the Lincoln



Myrtle Spurge is commonly found in rock gardens.



Myrtle Spurge is capable of projecting seeds 15 feet.



the other is on Hwy. 28 in Odessa.

Myrtle spurge is **poisonous if ingested**, causing nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. This plant exudes **toxic, milky latex**, which can cause severe skin and eye irritations. Wearing gloves, long sleeves, and shoes is highly recommended when in contact with Myrtle spurge, as **all** plant parts are considered poisonous. Although sometimes grown as a decorative plant in xeric gardens, Myrtle spurge is considered highly invasive and noxious. This



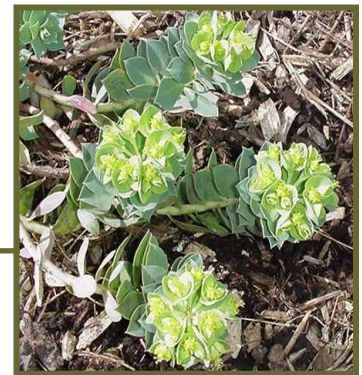
County

Noxious Weed List in 2006, after being discovered in two locations. One at Rantz Marina on Lake Roosevelt and

plant can rapidly expand into sensitive ecosystems, displacing native vegetation and reducing forage for wildlife.



A close-up of the Myrtle Spurge heart shaped bracts.



Myrtle Spurge leaves have a very waxy coating, don't forget to use a surfactant.



Key identifying traits

- Inconspicuous **yellow-green flowers** are surrounded by **heart shaped bracts**.
- Plants can grow 8-12 inches tall on ascending to **trailing stems** rising at the tips.
- Oval, blue-green, fleshy, succulent-like **leaves** are arranged in **close spirals** around the stems.
- **Stems** grow from a prostrate woody base.

Biology and ecology

- Perennial plant, **highly invasive**, usually spread by seed, although root fragments can also produce new plants. Capable of projecting seeds 15 feet.
- **Poisonous** if digested, causing nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. **All** plant parts are considered poisonous.
- The milky sap is **extremely caustic** and will cause rashes and blistering of the skin, and severe irritation to the eyes.
- **Flowering** occurs in March and April.
- Also known as **donkey tail** or **creeping spurge**. It was introduced as an ornamental and is often used in rock gardens.
- Livestock and animals generally avoid myrtle spurge. It does not tolerate frequent cultivation and therefore is **not a problem** in crops.



This picture shows how the Myrtle Spurge spreads.



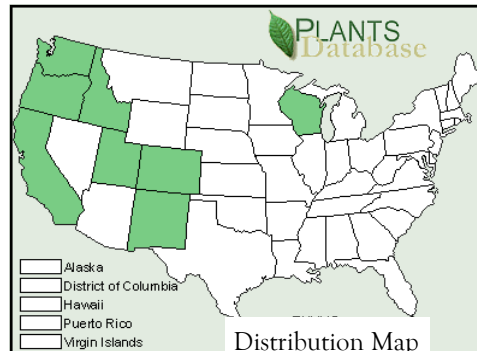
On the left, seed pods on the Myrtle Spurge plant and on the right dried seeds.

Lincoln County Noxious Weed Control Board
405 Ross St.
Davenport, WA 99122

Control Measures

- **Prevention:** Learn to identify plants; know your property.
- **Biological:** None known at this time.
- **Cultural:** Do not mow, the seeds will spread.
- **Mechanical:** **Not recommended!**
- Small infestations can be hand pulled or dug. **Be sure to wear gloves and long sleeves.**
- Remove as much root as possible and monitor for re-growth.
- **Chemical:** Fall treatment works a little better than spring.
- Most any herbicide such as 2, 4-D will work, in fall, use an residual herbicide .
- Be sure to include a **surfactant** due to the waxy leaf surface.
- **Read the label** instructions before applying any herbicides.

The following states have Myrtle spurge infestations. It is illegal to cultivate Myrtle Spurge in Colorado. Myrtle Spurge is readily available for purchase on the internet. One consumer wrote in saying the plant was taking over entire hillsides in the foothills along the Wasatch Front in Utah, choking out the native foliage, calling it an environmental disaster. Not only is this plant toxic, it is invasive as well.



Top view of Myrtle Spurge in bloom.



Picture shows the toxic white milky sap of the Myrtle Spurge plant.



Myrtle spurge allowed to grow along a drainage ditch where it has the potential to spread downstream.

Photos courtesy of : WSNWCB, written findings; Jefferson County Weed & Pest; Kemper Center for Home Gardening; Mo.; Dan Sharratt, ODA; Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, Adams County Weed & Pest.