

DEDHAM'S LEAST WANTED!

Leafy Spurge, *Euphorbia esula*



Origin: Leafy spurge is native to Europe and Asia and was introduced accidentally into America in the early 1800s, possibly as a hitchhiker in sacks of oat seed.

Identification / Habitat: This invasive is an erect deep-rooted, branching perennial that can grow from one to two feet tall. It frequently grows in dense colonies from horizontal roots. These root systems may extend many feet into the ground. The sap from this plant comes out white and milky. The leaves are bluish-green linear leaves that are 3-8 centimeter long and 3-10 millimeter wide. The plant blooms with small yellow flowers. The leaves and flowers alternate along the stem. This plant grows in full sun conditions and tolerates moist to dry soils. It is more aggressive in dryer soils, and is more prevalent in areas where the soils have been disturbed.

Dispersal: Seed capsules explode, dispersing seed up to 15 feet, even further with the help of wind or water. The root system is complex allowing the

tinest of root rhizome to quickly spread, thus greatly hampering eradication.

Problems: Large infestations give the landscape a yellowish tinge due to the yellow bracts. Leafy spurge invades pastures and other open areas. Spreading quickly, it can absorb a great deal of water nutrients from the soil. It is a major pest of national parks and nature preserves in the western United States. It can completely overtake large areas of land and displace native vegetation.

Control: Hand pulling is recommended for small plants such as this as long as one takes care to pull out the root system with the plant. Pulled plants should be removed from the site to prevent further spread and disposed of either in black plastic bags or at the town composting facility.

Any removal within 100 feet of wetland resource areas, including certified vernal pools, or within 200 feet of a perennial stream may require approval from the Dedham Conservation Commission. Please contact the Conservation Department *before* you begin!

