



FACT SHEET

Spurge Laurel (*Daphne laureola*)

- Spurge laurel is a slow-growing, shade-tolerant, long-lived evergreen shrub from Europe and the Mediterranean region.
- The smooth, dark green leaves are shiny on top and lighter in color underneath. They are narrowly oval, between 1 and 5 inches long, arranged alternately on the stem with a whorl of leaves at the end of each branch.
- The mature bark is gray with a yellow hue while young branches are green.
- The inconspicuous yellow-green flowers appear in clusters at the base of the leaves. They are small and very fragrant.
- The fruits are little black berries with one seed and are poisonous
- Thymelaeaceae family.



DISTRIBUTION:

Spurge laurel has been seen at Fort Worden and near East Beach County Park on Marrowstone Island. Other infestations probably occur in the county but have not been documented. We would like to know about other infestations so if you see it, please contact our office.

ECOLOGY:

- Will grow in sun or shade.
- Spreads by seed or vegetatively through the production of root sprouts.

WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Spurge laurel is a threat to certain native forest ecosystems.
- The berries, leaves and bark are poisonous to humans, cats and dogs.
- Handling the plant can cause contact dermatitis.
- Once established, this plant is very difficult to eradicate.

Spurge laurel is a Class B Noxious Weed. Control is not required in Jefferson County, but is encouraged.

CONTROL

Prevention and early detection are the best means of control!

- **Do not buy or plant** spurge laurel
- **Remove** existing plants if possible
- **Replant** with a desirable (preferably native) plant species to discourage re-infestation
- **Monitor** the site for seedlings and remove as they appear

HAND PULLING is possible for seedlings and young plants. Larger plants can be pulled with a weed wrench or similar tool but all of the root should be removed to avoid re-growth from root sprouts. After pulling, the area should be monitored for new seedlings and covered with a deep mulch. It is easiest to remove the entire plants when the ground is soft, in the fall through early spring.

When shrubs are too large to pull, **CUTTING** the stem below the soil line (where the stem color changes from brown to orange) can be an effective means of control.

Caution: Because of the irritating toxins in the sap, fruit and leaves, wear gloves and other protective clothing when removing or cutting spurge laurel.

HERBICIDES can be effective, but should always be applied with care. Do not apply herbicides over or near water bodies. Read the label to check that you are applying a herbicide in the right place, to the right plant, at the right time, and in the right amount. For perennial weeds, long term control requires stopping seed production **and** attacking the weed's root system. Translocated herbicides, (ones that move throughout a plant's system) are recommended. These are most effective on young, actively growing plants. Applications to active growth increase effectiveness because the herbicide moves around the plant more quickly. Also, herbicide is more easily absorbed by clean, new leaves that have not developed the thickened cuticle (waxy coating) present on mature leaves, which resists herbicide penetration.

- **Cut-stump treatment** (cutting the plant down to a few inches above ground and immediately painting the cut stump surface with undiluted herbicide) is a very effective way to control spurge laurel. Check the label first—make sure that this method is listed.
- **Note:** Most herbicides will **NOT** prevent germination of weed seeds already in the soil, so monitoring and retreatment are necessary.

Call the Weed Board for specific herbicide advice.



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