

Leafy spurge
(*Euphorbia esula*)

Currently in Montana, noxious weed infest about 8.2 million acres. Many of these state listed noxious weeds were brought to America as ornamentals for gardens, medicinal purposes, by accident in discarded soil from a ship's ballast, or unintentionally in bags of seed brought from other parts of the world. Whatever the cause of introduction non-native plant species have found their way onto Montana's state listed noxious weed list.

Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) is native to Eurasia and was accidentally introduced into the United States as a contaminant in crop seed. Leafy spurge is well suited to survive in dry, open environments. The leaves of leafy spurge are small and lanceolate with a smooth margin. Flowers are produced in umbels with a pair of bright yellow-green petal like bracts at the base of the flower head. Bracts appear in late spring, while flowers do not develop until early summer. Every part of the plant contains a toxic white milky sap. The plant is toxic to horses, cattle and humans. Leafy spurge can be difficult to control because underground lateral roots can expand up to 15' a crossed and can reach up to 24' in depth. The root system has numerous buds called nodes from which new plants can grow. Another way that leafy spurge reproduces is through seed. A single leafy spurge plant can produce up to 200 seeds per year. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to 10 years. When the capsule that contains the leafy spurge seed dries, it breaks open and the seeds are forced out with a tremendous force, up to 15' away from the parent plant! Leafy spurge can be controlled by various integrated weed management techniques such as herbicides, biological control, and grazing by sheep and goats.

Please take a few moments to learn about noxious weeds. If noxious weeds are not currently a problem in your area, they may be in the near future. For more information about Montana's state listed noxious weeds, regulated plants, or weed species listed on your county weed list, please contact your local county weed district (can list weed district name here... ex: Lewis & Clark County Weed District) at _(406)_(Phone number)_. Or you can contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-5600.