

Euphorbia cyparissias (Cypress Spurge)

Pick an image for a larger view. See the [glossary](#) for icon descriptions.

Detailed Information

Flower:



Flat to rounded cluster at the top of the stem, the main cluster branches radiating from the stem tip; each branch may be forked 1 or 2 times. Smaller clusters often arise from the upper leaf axils. Individual flowers have a pair of ¼-inch round to heart-shaped, green to yellowish bracts that may look like petals. In the center are 4 tiny flat glands with a pointed projection on each end, somewhat horn-like. Under the glands are the globular ovaries. The glands are greenish

to yellowish to orangeish; the ovaries are green. At the base of the terminal cluster is a whorl of 10 or more leaf-like bracts, shaped like the leaves but may be shorter and/or wider.

Leaves and stem:



Leaves are very narrow, to 1½ inches long and 1/8 inch wide with no leaf stalk and become larger as they ascend the stem; the lowest leaves are very short and may be scale-like. Leaves are initially densely packed on the stem but spread out as the plant matures; a young plant resembles a small pine or spruce tree. Attachment is alternate but may look whorled or opposite due to crowding. Color is dark green to bluish green. Leaves and stems are hairless.



Stems are usually unbranched on the lower stem but often have short, widely spreading, non-flowering, leafy branches on the upper stem. Stems are erect to ascending, hairless, single or multiple from the base. Plants form colonies from spreading rhizomes.

Fruit:



Fruit is a 3-sectioned capsule, about 1/8-inch across, covered in minute bumps giving a grainy texture; each section contains a single, blackish seed.

Notes:

Cypress Spurge is very similar to [Leafy Spurge](#) (*Euphorbia virgata*) but is generally a smaller plant, has narrower leaves, blooms earlier than Leafy Spurge, and often has short, non-flowering, leafy branches on the upper stem that are nearly perpendicular to the stem, where Leafy Spurge branches, when present, are more ascending and closer to the base of the stem. Like Leafy Spurge, it can form large colonies and is becoming a quite common weed.

More photos



[Cypress Spurge plants](#)

Plant Info

Also known as: Graveyard-weed

Genus: [Euphorbia](#)

Family: [Euphorbiaceae \(Spurge\)](#)

Life cycle: perennial

Origin: Europe

Status: • Weedy

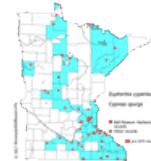
Habitat: part shade, sun; fields, open woods, roadsides, waste areas, disturbed soil

Bloom season: May - August

Plant height: 6 to 12 inches

[Wetland Indicator Status:](#) none

MN county distribution
(click map to enlarge):



National distribution
(click map to enlarge):





[Cypress Spurge plants](#)



[a small colony of Cypress Spurge](#)



[a dense colony of Cypress Spurge](#)



[Cypress Spurge with Crown Vetch](#)



[Cypress Spurge emerging in spring](#)



[Cypress Spurge in fall](#)



Photos by K. Chayka taken in Ramsey County. Other photos courtesy Peter M. Dziuk.

Comments

Have you seen this plant in Minnesota, or have any other comments about it?

Posted by: Kara - Eastern Scott County - Credit River Township
on: 2010-05-23 11:59:23

I discovered this plant in my woodland edge this spring. Haven't seen it before. I have just a few plants but after reading this will be pulling it.

Posted by: James - Dakota
on: 2011-06-10 23:55:36

Had this in my garden for at least 10 years. It's in part shade spot, mesic soil. The "colony" is small and hasn't spread one bit in all this time. I don't see the point in removing it since it's not at all aggressive here. (Am removing the garlic mustard though!)

Posted by: Mary Kay - Virginia, MN
on: 2011-07-28 08:47:23

I have had this in my garden for several years. It was given to me by the tender of our town's community garden, who was thinning her patch. It spreads a lot, and I have shared it with friends, as I have thinned it. It's lovely, and I am very fond of it. I have had no trouble controlling it, simply by thinning it annually.

Posted by: K. Chayka
on: 2011-07-28 09:17:22

I just want to ask gardeners, who cultivate weeds like Cypress spurge, if your control measures extend to the roadsides and woodland edges where this species transplants itself? If not, then I think your vision is too narrowly focused on your own garden

and the belief that you can keep an invasive species confined. Plants spread by wind, water and critters, over which you have no control. While not as serious a problem as its cousin [leafy spurge](#), Cypress spurge is still a plant I find in far too many natural areas where it does not belong. I ask that you look beyond your own yard to the bigger picture.

Posted by: Penny - SE minneapolis - Longfellow region
on: 2011-07-30 14:01:23

my neighbor at the end of the street has a huge patch in the front yard and now i am seeing it in my yard - didn't know it to be characterized as noxious. Should I eradicate then? Is it beneficial to wildlife in anyway or more damaging? Thanks

Posted by: K. Chayka
on: 2011-07-30 19:30:59

I have not read anything that indicates Cypress spurge has any benefit whatsoever to wildlife. It is well documented, however, that bruised or broken stems exude a milky sap that is irritating to the skin and especially the eyes. I wouldn't want it in my yard. It is as weedy as a dandelion.

Posted by: PS - SE minneapolis
on: 2012-04-21 14:09:47

a neighbor on my street has a front yard full of this. It now has turned up in my front yard rain garden sending roots more than 10 inches underground by which it invaded many of my native plants and into the lawn...nearly impossible to get rid of it you don't dig down deep enough and remove all the roots. Like a dandelion but insidious because you don't see where the root runners have spread to until they send up new shoots sometimes 2 feet away. Invasive!

Posted by: Noelle - Ely
on: 2012-06-04 21:51:50

Spotted them in the woods on a trail near Ojibwe Lake.

Posted by: Sharon
on: 2013-05-16 16:32:15

This is just a word of caution - one of my clients inherited a garden infested with cypress spurge. Having developed a love (for her garden) hate (for the spurge) relationship, she built herself a sieve and proceeded to dig up and sieve all the soil (4-5 feet deep) in the infested portion of her garden. She sat in the dirt while she toiled and before long, she developed a severe dermal reaction across her backside - even through her pants - from the plant sap that was in the soil.

Posted by: Tammy - Jordan (Scott County)
on: 2014-06-12 21:25:09

This is coming up in an old farm field along my driveway. So pretty and was fun looking it up on this site. Too bad I have to get rid of it. Sounds very undesirable! And I don't want it invading my prairie restoration project.

Posted by: Mama Jo
on: 2014-10-16 13:10:35

Be VERY CAREFUL with this plant! I developed an allergic reaction when pruning without gloves, while trying to eliminate love-vine which was entangled in the Euphorbia; the milky latex caused severe irritation to my eyes, also developed swollen irritated rash on face.

Posted by: Cooper - Merrifield, Crow Wing County
on: 2017-06-08 08:37:54

Quite prolific in the roadside ditches in central Crow Wing

Posted by: Clem - Merrifield, Crow Wing County
on: 2017-06-27 08:51:40

Large quantities of it, roadside, in Merrifield along Cty Rd 3 between the Half moon corner and Cty Rd 116 on the east side of the road.



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