

## Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)

**POISONOUS/CAUTION**

### Description

A long-lived perennial that forms an extensive, persistent, creeping root system. Stems are arranged in clumps, smooth and hairless, grow up to 1 m tall and contain a milky latex. Leaves are numerous and attached directly to the stem, arranged alternately or sometimes spirally. The leaves are up to 7 cm long, narrow, waxy, have smooth edges and are bluish-green in color, turning yellowish or reddish-orange in late summer.



Flowers are small, yellowish-green, lack both petals and sepals, and are supported by 2 green, heart-shaped, leaf-like bracts, arranged in numerous small clusters. Seeds are about 2mm, smooth, oblong, light gray to dark brown in color and grow in pods on top of the bracts. When mature the dried seed pods explode. CAUTION: All parts of the plant contain a milky-colored latex that can poison livestock and cause skin irritation on humans.

### Key Identifiers

- ✓ White latex in all parts of the plant
- ✓ Deep and spreading roots with buds
- ✓ Greenish-yellow bracts under flowers

### Location in Canada

Leafy Spurge has been reported in all Canadian provinces with the exception of Nunavut, NWT and Newfoundland.

### Resources

<http://www.invasiveplants.ab.ca/Downloads/FS-LeafySpurge.pdf>

THE BIOLOGY OF CANADIAN WEEDS . 39 *Euphorbia esula* L.

### Similar species

It is distinguished from most other plants by its milky latex, spreading roots with pink buds, its slender green leaves that are mostly alternate, and its yellowish-green inflorescence.

*Euphorbia spp* -It is distinguished from annual spurges by its perennial habit, and tall, coarse stems with mostly linear leaves.

Cypress spurge is very similar in appearance, but leafy spurge is taller, has longer leaves, and less branching in the upper part of the plant.