



## Weed of the Month: Euphorbia Esula L.

Welcome to our "Weed of the Month" feature, designed to raise awareness about the impact of noxious invasive weeds on our environment. This month, we're focusing on Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*), an aggressive plant species that poses a significant threat to native ecosystems and agricultural lands.

### Identification:

Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula* L.) is a creeping, herbaceous perennial weed of foreign origin that reproduces from seed and vegetative root buds. Leafy spurge is an erect plant that grows 1 to 3 feet tall. Leaves are bluish-green with smooth margins, 0.25 inch to 0.5 inch wide, and 1 inch to 4 inches long. Umbel flowers are surrounded by heartshaped, showy, yellow-green bracts. Flowers occur in many clusters toward the top of the plant



Left- Illustrated diagram of Leafy Spurge structure and makeup  
Right - Leafy Spurge flower cluster



Brachwurz, *Euphorbia esula*.  
From *Deutschlands Flora in Abbildungen*, 1796.  
By Johann Georg Sturm (Artist: Jacob Sturm)

### Invasive Behavior:

Leafy spurge is difficult to control. Its extensive root system has vast nutrient stores that let it recover from control attempts. Leafy spurge has an extensive root system that is abundant in the top foot of soil, and it may grow 15 feet deep or more. Roots contain substantial nutrient reserves that allow the weed to recover from stress, including control efforts. Many vegetative buds along roots grow into new shoots. This contributes to its persistence and spread.



Left- Leafy spurge in the early flower stage.





**Impact:**

It can reduce cattle carrying capacity of rangeland or pastures by 50 to 75 percent. About half of this loss is from decreased grass production. Cattle won't graze in dense leafy spurge stands and these areas are a 100 percent loss to producers.

**Control and Management:**

Leafy spurge is difficult to manage and can recover from almost any control effort. Therefore, a management scheme that combines control methods over four to five years is recommended. Vigorous grass growth is an important aspect of leafy spurge control. Over-grazing stresses grasses and makes them much less competitive with weeds, leafy spurge in particular. Irrigation, where applicable, may favor grass growth and make it more competitive with leafy spurge.

Left- infestation of Leafy Spurge  
Right - Leafy Spurge stems and leaves



**Prevention:**

Preventing the spread of Leafy Spurge is key to its management. Be vigilant for any signs of this weed in your area and report sightings to the Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at (530) 822-7500.

By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Leafy Spurge and protect our native ecosystems. Join us next month for a new "Weed of the Month" feature, where we'll highlight another noxious invasive plant and share tips on how to address it.

For more information about Leafy Spurge, feel free to visit the California Invasive Plant Council website at:

<https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/profile/euphorbia-esula-profile>

For more information about our other county programs, visit our website at:

<https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/agricultural-department>

Thank you for your dedication to preserving our environment and agricultural land!

