

# Have You Heard About Leafy Spurge?



**Leafy Spurge** (*Euphorbia esula*) (left) is a serious pest in the grasslands of the Great Plains and is a potential threat to the greater Midwest, including Illinois. In Montana, the Dakotas and Wyoming alone, Leafy spurge costs tax payers more than \$144 million a year in production losses, control expenses and other impacts. Leafy spurge tolerates damp to dry soils grows on roadsides, and in pasture, prairies, and savannas. Although relatively uncommon in Lake and McHenry Counties, this plant is beginning to spread our area. Leafy spurge is toxic to livestock and horses, and can cause blistering in the mouth and throat if consumed. Early detection will reduce the risk to animals, natural areas and the need for expensive control efforts in the future. **Identification:** Leafy spurge is a deep-rooted perennial that reproduces by seeds, root fragments, and roots, and grows from May to October.

Leafy spurge has numerous narrow, smooth leaves along the stem, grows up to 24 inches, and contains a milky sap. It produces a flat-topped cluster of yellowish-green flowers. Flowering occurs from early May to late June, and seed begins to develop in early July. Plants turn orange in October. Generally, there are several non-flowering plants scattered around patches of flowering plants. Control is possible, but requires several years of mowing, herbiciding, and or grazing. Your local Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) can help you develop an effective control plan.



Leafy spurge flower head



Flower w/ seed capsule



Milky sap (D. Eagan, Univ. WI-Madison)



Fall color

**If you find Leafy spurge in your area, please let us know.**

In McHenry County, IL call 815-675-2386 x 321  
In Lake County, IL call 847-968-3285

***Thank you for helping prevent the spread of Leafy spurge!***

**Prepared by the Lake and McHenry County Cooperative Weed Management Area**  
For more information on Leafy spurge, visit <http://www.team.ars.usda.gov/>