Cypress Spurge

Colorado Dept. of Agriculture,
Conservation Services Division
700 Kipling Street
Suite 4000
Lakewood, CO 80215
303-239-4100

Key ID Points

1. Flowers are yellowish-green in color.
2. There are many branched stems that are covered with numerous narrow leaves.

Updated on:
01/09

Cypress spurge
Identification and Management

Identification and Impacts

Cypress spurge *(Euphorbia cyparissias)* is a low growing perennial that overwinters as root and crown tissue. Cypress spurge reproduces by seed and lateral root buds. Leaves are linear, approximately 1/2 to 1 1/4 inches long and 1 to 2 mm wide. Upper stem leaves that occur near the inflorescence are yellow or yellowish-green in color. Leaves are stalkless, alternate, narrow and linear to lance-shaped. Stems are 4 to 32 inches high, hairless, green to yellowish green in color and branch in the upper portions. The leaves and stems emit a milky, toxic sap when broken. Flowers are yellowish-green usually turning reddish green towards maturity and are clustered in bunches at the ends of stems.

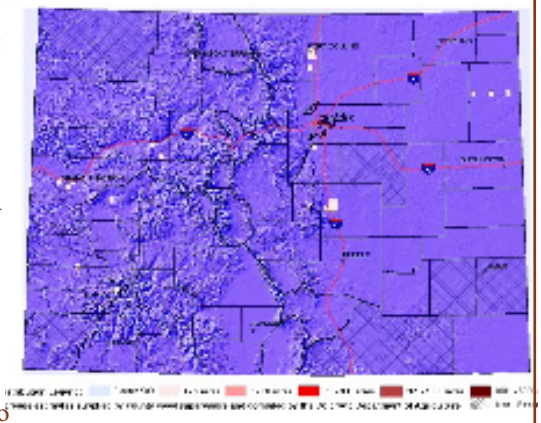
The plants milky sap is an irritant and may cause dermatitis or rashes. Although sheep may eat it, the plant is toxic to horses and cattle. Animals should not be pastured where spurges grow. Humans should be careful and avoid contacting the plant with bare skin as it can cause skin irritation for some people.

Cypress spurge is an invasive ornamental plant that is native to Eurasia. It prefers direct sunlight, but is tolerant to the shade. It commonly occurs in dry to moderately moist meadows, pastures, forest edges, roadsides, Rights-of-Way, cemeteries, and gardens. Cypress spurge is popular in xeriscaping and rock gardens and generally does not occur on intensively cultivated soils. The soil seed reserve is estimated to be at least eight years.

The key to effective control of cypress spurge is preventing the establishment of viable plant communities. When establishment has occurred, there are different control methods to consider. Like most perennial plants, exhausting the nutrient reserves in the root system is important in controlling cypress spurge. Using a combination of mechanical and herbicide treatments in combination can achieve eradication over time.

Cypress spurge is designated as a "List A" species in the Colorado Noxious Weed Act. It is required to be eradicated wherever found in the State. For more information visit www.colorado.gov/ag/weeds and click on the Noxious Weed Management Program link. Or call the State Weed Coordinator at the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Conservation Services Division, 303-239-4100.

Map of cypress spurge infestation.



Clockwise, from lower left, photos: Unknown, Richard Casagrande, University of Rhode Island; Stacey Leicht, University of Connecticut; Steve Dewey, Utah State University; and Kelly Uhing, Colorado Department of Agriculture.. Map by Crystal Andrews, CDA.

Euphorbia cyparissias

Management Recommendations

CULTURAL
Keeping desirable vegetation healthy and thick will help keep invaders out. Prevent the establishment of new infestations by minimizing disturbance and seed dispersal. Survey your land regularly to detect new invaders and eradicate any new populations quickly.

BIOLOGICAL
Biocontrol agents are not included in the prescribed management plans by the State for List A Species. Eradication is the management objective of all List A's. No biocontrol agent for Cypress spurge is available. For more information on biocontrol in Colorado, please contact the Palisade Insectary of the Colorado Department of Agriculture at 970-464-7916.

MECHANICAL
Hand pulling or digging is a viable option when managing new, small cypress spurge infestations. Tillage may simply encourage its spread. Be sure soil is moist and extract the entire root system. When handling plants wear rubber gloves and eye protection to protect yourself from the irritating milky sap.

Integrated Weed Management:

Since Cypress spurge has been identified in small quantities around Colorado, preventing the populations from spreading is important in management of the weed. Using a combination of control methods proves to be the most effective way to control populations. Using mechanical and herbicide control methods together proves to be key in eradicating established infestations.

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HERBICIDES

NOTE: The following are recommendations for herbicides that can be applied to range and pasturelands unless otherwise noted. Not all products listed are for use near homes. Please read label for exact rates. **Always read, understand, and follow the label directions. The herbicide label is the LAW!**

HERBICIDE	RATE	APPLICATION TIMING
Quinclorac (Paramount - non-crop - general use)	16 oz product/A + 2 pt/A methylated seed oil or crop oil concentrate	Apply at the flowering stage. (Spring time)
2,4-D + dicamba (Rangestar - general use)	2 qt. 2,4-D (2.0 lb/ai) + 1 qt dicamba/A (1 lb ai)	Apply at the flowering stage. (Spring time)
Picloram (Tordon 22K-restricted use)	2-4 pints product/acre + 0.25% v/v non-ionic surfactant	Apply in spring at full bloom, or in the fall during regrowth.