

## Other Control Methods

Chemical methods should only be utilized if you feel that your infestation of spurge laurel is too large or difficult to remove by hand and with basic tools. Spraying herbicide on the thick waxy leaves will not cause enough damage to kill spurge laurel. Cutting the stumps just above the surface of the ground and immediately dabbing or painting on a triclopyr or glyphosate product onto the cut stumps has proven to be effective in some trials. For any herbicide applications we urge you to work with a licensed herbicide applicator and to please refer to Metro's Grow Smart Grow Safe guide ([www.lhwmp.org/home/gsgs](http://www.lhwmp.org/home/gsgs)) or contact your county noxious weed coordinator. Always read and follow the label on any chemical product you are using!



Photo: Sarah Gregg

### SUBMIT YOUR REPORT TODAY!

Spurge Laurel is a top priority species within the 4-County CWMA boundary. Please report all sighting to the Oregon Invasive Hotline by visiting [www.oregoninvasiveshotline.org](http://www.oregoninvasiveshotline.org) or [www.invasivespecies.wa.gov/sighting\\_form.shtml](http://www.invasivespecies.wa.gov/sighting_form.shtml) if in Washington.



The mission of the 4-County Cooperative Weed Management Area, comprising Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington Counties, is to create and support collaborative weed management in the greater Portland area. For more details on our collaborative efforts in management, mapping, and outreach, please visit our website:

[www.4countycwma.org](http://www.4countycwma.org)



## SPURGE LAUREL

*(Daphne laureola)*

4-County CWMA Class A weed  
Oregon Class B noxious weed  
Washington Class B noxious weed



Photo: Steve Law

## Overview

The spurge laurel, native to Europe and the Mediterranean region, has been used as an ornamental shrub in the Pacific Northwest because it does well in the local climate. Like many tough invasives, spurge laurel grows well in heavy shade and thus can thrive in understory plant communities. Once established, it grows into thickets. This plant spreads primarily by seed. *All parts of this plant are toxic. Do not handle without protection.* If ingested, spurge laurel sap can cause a severe rash in some people. Handle with gloves and take appropriate precautions.

## How to Identify

Spurge laurels are evergreen, generally grow to 3-4 feet tall, and resemble small leafy trees. Leaves are dark green, but newer growth can be a lighter yellow-green. Leaves are thick and waxy and grow in dense whorls. Stems are green to grayish-green. Flowers are small, green to pale pink, and in clusters of 5-20; they grow between the leaves near the tops of the stems. Berries are spherical to egg-shaped, turning from green to purple-black as they ripen.

## Lookalikes

Spurge laurel may look similar to laurel varieties or rhododendrons and are often found growing alongside these other species. Spurge laurel can be distinguished from these plants because of its long, thin, dark olive-green leaves and its distinctive clusters of small flowers below the top whorl of leaves; nevertheless, this species has been consistently overlooked by homeowners, who mistake it for rhododendron or other lookalikes.



Photo: Steve Hammond

## Prevention

Oregon escapees are centered around human population centers, making prevention key to limiting their spread. This species was formerly sold as an ornamental and is still found in many gardens. Birds and small mammals ingest spurge laurel fruits and spread seeds randomly, making detection very difficult and allowing spurge laurel to spread undetected into natural areas. Early identification and timely removal of spurge laurel prior to it going to fruit/seed is crucial to preventing its spread.

## When to Remove

The spurge laurel flowers in late winter/early spring, and the growing season occurs nearly year round. It is best to remove plants before flowers or seeds form and when the ground is saturated (late winter/early spring).

## Basic Manual Control Methods

THIS METHOD SHOULD BE USED WHEN:

- Terrain is flat or gently sloped
- Invasion may be near surface water
- There are desired plants in or around invasion

TOOLS TO CHOOSE FROM:

- Gloves and protective clothing to prevent contact with skin
- Loppers/Hand pruners/Machetes
- Shovels
- Weed wrenches ([weedwrench.com](http://weedwrench.com))
- Bag for seeds/flowers

**CAUTION: WEAR PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND GLOVES WHEN HANDLING THIS PLANT.**

When soil is moist, PULL smaller shrubs out of the ground using gloves. If the spurge laurel is too large to be pulled from the ground, use a weed wrench to pull the plant and as much root matter as possible from the soil. A shovel may also be used to dig out the plant and its root. After removal, the area should be monitored for several years for new seedlings and covered with deep mulch.

If SEEDS are present, remove from site. Place seeds and flowers in a bag labeled "INVASIVE PLANTS - DO NOT COMPOST". It is believed that seeds can live up to two years in soils. If soil or compost comes in contact with seeds, be sure to monitor soil or compost for seedlings. Dispose of these materials in the trash.

COMPOST leaves and branches with other plants, but monitor closely for new growth. It is not well known if this plant can continue growing if left on top of the ground. Be sure to remove seeds and flowers and watch for new growth or developing roots.

PLANT native plants in the area which is being controlled after the bulk of the invasive plants are removed. This will help to prevent new and recurring invasions.

MONITOR the site once spurge laurel eradication begins to check for new growth. Because roots left in the soil may resprout, sites should be checked every few months and new growth should be pulled or dug out. Once the majority of roots have been removed, site should only need yearly or bi-yearly monitoring. One treatment generally does not effectively kill an invasion. We recommend using manual removal methods whenever possible, then using herbicide to destroy tough-to-reach areas or particularly problematic spots. Then, SPOT PULL any new plants that emerge after treatment.



Photo: Sarah Patton



Photo: Cheryl Moorhead