

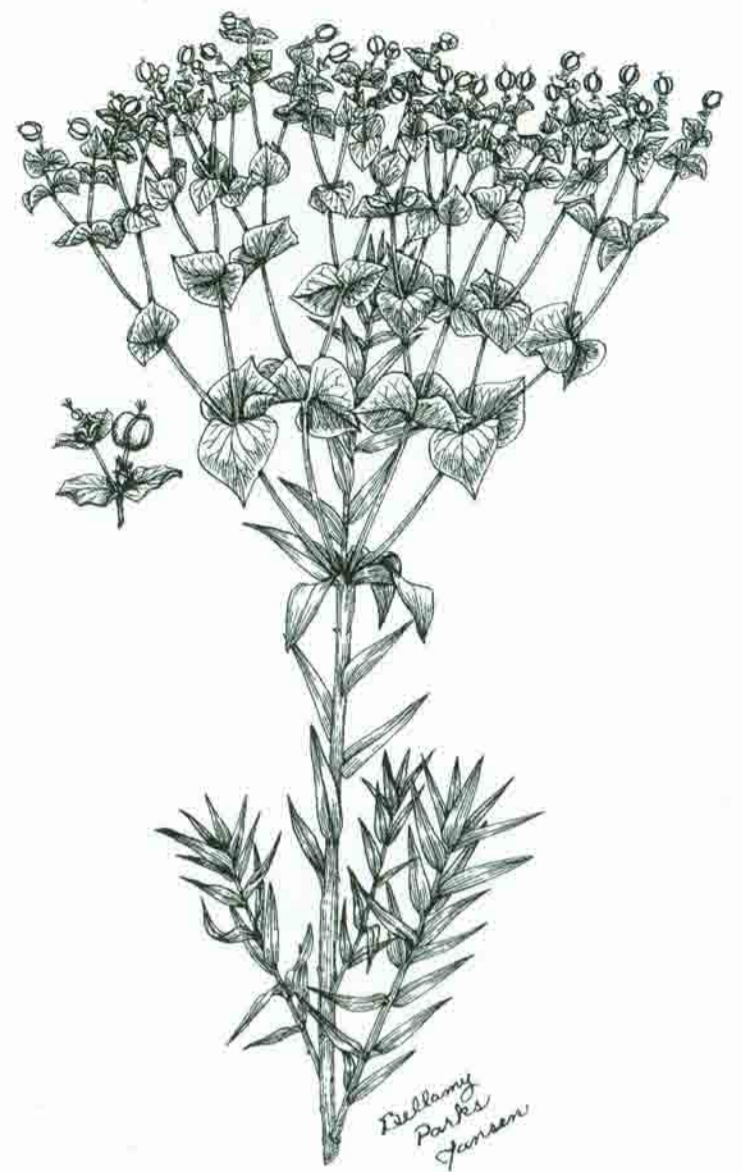
Leafy spurge

EUPHORBIACEAE - Spurge Family

Euphorbia esula L.



- Common Name:** Leafy spurge
Growth Form: Forb
Life Span: Perennial
Origin: Eurasia
Flowering Dates: May-September
Reproduction: Seeds and adventitious shoot buds
Height: 0.1-0.9 m (0.3-2.6 ft, usually 1-2 ft)
Inflorescence: Umbel of cyathia; each cyathium with 12-25 staminate flowers surrounding 1 pistillate flower, subtended by 2 bracts; bracts cordate (1-1.4 cm long), yellowish
Flower: Greenish-yellow (1.5-3 mm long), unisexual; pistillate flowers divided into 3 cells
Fruit: Capsule (2.5-3.5 mm long), compartments 3; each compartment with 1 seed
Seed: Ovoid to cylindrical (2.2-3 mm long), gray to brown, smooth, mottled
Leaves: Alternate; blades simple, oblanceolate to oblong (3-10 cm long, 3-10 mm wide), wider above the middle, 1 prominent vein, drooping, margins entire; surfaces without hair; contain a milky latex
Stems: Erect, branched above, without hair; contain a milky white latex
Underground: Roots deep, woody, spreading, brown with numerous pinkish scaly adventitious shoot buds
Where Found: Northern and central Great Plains infesting irrigation ditch banks, roadsides, fields, woodlands, shelter belts, disturbed sites, rangeland, and especially subirrigated meadows. (NE, SD, ND, OK, MN, IA, MO, MT, WY, CO, NM, AB, SK, & MB)
Uses and Values: Leafy spurge is eaten by sheep and goats.
Poisoning: Leafy spurge is considered toxic to cattle, however, sheep and goats eat it following an acclimation period with little or no harm. Honey produced from it has an unpleasant taste.
Other: Leafy spurge is a noxious weed in many states. These plants aggressively and quickly spread. Biological control with insects introduced from its native environment in Eurasia may provide some control assistance.
Similar Species: Cypress spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias* L.) is another perennial and is scattered in the eastern one-half of the Great Plains. It was originally planted as an ornamental and may be found in yards, cemeteries, and roadsides. Its leaves are only 1-3 cm long, and the plants are shorter than leafy spurge.



Each cyathium is subtended by two yellowish heart-shaped bracts and can produce three seeds.

Stems contain a milky white latex.

