

Cypress spurge

(*Euphorbia cyparissias*)



Key ID Features

Appearance: Can grow up to 12 inches tall. This herbaceous perennial plant invades open disturbed areas throughout the United States. All parts of the plant exude a white, milky sap when broken.

Foliage: The leaves are small, up to 1 inch long. The leaves can be alternate or whorled, and are bright green and linear in shape.

Flowers: Yellow-green, inconspicuous flowers are in a cluster at the top of the plant. Flowers mature to red.

Fruit: The fruit is three-lobed and contains 1-3 egg shaped smooth gray seeds that measure 0.06-0.08 in. The Cypress Spurge produces large clonal colonies through an extensive underground root system that allows this plant to reproduce with lateral root buds.



Photo by summitpost.org

The Impact

Euphorbia cyparissias can rapidly populate open disturbed areas such as fields, pastures, agricultural land, roadsides, and yards. It is toxic to livestock, so established populations reduce the forage value of pastures. The white, milky sap can be irritating to skin and should be avoided. It can form large monocultures displacing native beneficial vegetation and reduce biodiversity.

Quick Facts

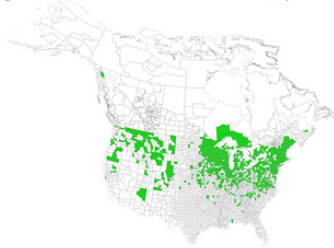
Plant Family: Spurge family (*Euphorbiaceae*)

Habitat: Abandoned fields, agricultural field edges, open disturbed areas, pastures, railroad right-of-ways, roadsides, utility right-of-way, vacant lot, yards, or gardens. *Euphorbia cyparissias* is most often found in old fields and natural grasslands.

Present in Vermont?: Yes

Method of Spread: Spreads primarily through its extensive root system and by seed.

cypress spurge (Euphorbia cyparissias) including child taxa
Cypress Spurge distribution courtesy of [EDDmaps.org](https://www.eddmaps.org)



Native Plant Alternatives



Brown-eyed Susan
(*Rudbeckia triloba*)

Beautiful native flowering perennial that supports pollinators and wildlife.



Sundrops
(*Oenothera fruticosa*)

Native flowering plant that supports pollinators and erosion control, and has native cultural significance.

Life Cycle

Plants overwinter as seed or root and crown tissue. Over-wintering buds develop on the indeterminate roots. New shoots emerge, and seeds germinate, each spring soon after the snow cover melts. Flowering begins the first or second week of May. Seeds may mature as early as the third week in June. A second flowering often occurs in late summer or early fall.

Common Look-alike

Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)



Distinguishing features:

Leaves are lance shaped, smooth, and 1-4 in. long. They are arranged alternately along the stem, becoming shorter and more ovate towards the top of the stem. Flowers are more greenish than cypress spurge.

Control Information

To learn more about identification & control options, check out the Gallery of Land Invasives on [VTinvasives.org](https://vtinvasives.org) and these additional resources:

[New York Invasives](#), [Colorado state](#),