

Mason County Noxious Weed Control

Mezereum Family

Spurge Laurel

Daphne laureola

Identification Tips

- Flowers are small and particularly fragrant at night. Non-showy yellow-green flowers with orange stamens appear in clusters at the base of the leaves.
- Narrowly oval, dark green, and shiny leaves are densely whorled at the top of the stem.
- Mature bark is gray with a yellow hue while young branches are green. Emits a strong odor when cut.
- Grows somewhat like a small tree up to 5 feet tall.

Regulated Class B Noxious Weed: Control Required



Biology

- Evergreen shrub that flowers from late January to late March or early April, followed by berries in early summer.
- Flowers are pollinated by bees, moths, and butterflies.
- The fruits are **poisonous**, one-seeded, oval, black berries.
- Reproduces through dispersal of seeds by birds and small mammals, but can also reproduce vegetatively through the production of root sprouts.



Spurge laurel is particularly problematic in Garry oak woodlands due to its ability to rapidly colonize the understory.

Impacts

- A serious threat to native forest ecosystems, like Garry oak woodlands and dry madrone/Douglas fir forests.
- Outcompetes native plants in the forest understory, reducing habitat and wildlife forage.
- Studies suggest it can alter soil chemistry.
- **All parts of the plant are highly toxic.**

Distribution

- Native to Western Europe and the Mediterranean, was introduced as a garden ornamental.
- In Mason County, most escaped populations are small and scattered, but can rapidly colonize forest understory.
- Will grow in sun or shade but prefers a mixture of both and requires drained, loamy-clay soils. Look for it in the forest understory.

**QUESTIONS? Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control at:
(360) 427-9670 ext. 592 or patriciag@co.mason.wa.us**

<https://extension.wsu.edu/mason/natural-resources/noxious-weed-program/>

What You Can Do

Spurge laurel is not yet widespread in Mason County. Control of it is a legal requirement in the county. Help stop the spread of this noxious weed by checking your property and nearby roads regularly. Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board if you see spurge laurel in Mason County.

Control Methods

Survey your yard and surrounding areas for spurge laurel. Choose control methods that are suited to your site, taking into account ecology of site, funding, and available labor. Long term control requires integrating methods. After removal, sites must be monitored for several years for new plants. **Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control for more information.**

Prevention

While spurge laurel is no longer legally sold as an ornamental, **do not transplant spurge laurel into your garden.** If you already have spurge laurel, take steps to remove plants and prevent it from going to seed by clipping all seed heads, containing them in a sealed bag, and disposing of in the trash. Prevent the spread of spurge laurel seeds by washing off boots, pets, tools, etc. after visiting a site with spurge laurel.

Manual Control

Caution: Due to the irritating toxins in the sap, fruit, and leaves, *always wear gloves and other protective clothing when removing or cutting spurge laurel.*

When soil is moist, pull smaller plants out of the ground and remove 6-8 inches or more of root. If the spurge laurel is too large to be pulled, use a weed wrench to dislodge the plant. Shrubs that are too large can be cut at the stem below the soil line which appears to minimize resprouting.

Due to its toxicity and ability to reproduce vegetatively, do not compost spurge laurel in your home compost bin. Instead, bag plants and place in the trash. **Never** dump spurge laurel in parks or natural areas. Do not burn spurge laurel or transport it inside the cab of a vehicle, as it can be irritating to the respiratory tract.

Monitor sites for regrowth as spurge laurel root fragments can continue to grow and produce new plants.

Replant with Early Blooming, Pollinator-Friendly Native Plants.

Spurge laurel attracts moths, bees, and butterflies and blooms early in the year. After removing plants, try replacing with pollinator-friendly native plants like the ones listed below.



Snowbrush
(*Ceanothus velutinus*)



Tall Oregon grape
(*Mahonia aquifolium*)



Oregon teatre
(*Ceanothus sanguineus*)



Nootka rose
(*Rosa nutkana*)

Chemical

Choose a formulation that is appropriate for your site. Follow the label exactly as written and use only at rate prescribed. Do not apply herbicide over or near water bodies.

Larger infestations of spurge laurel may require the use of herbicide. Due to the plant's ability to sprout from suckers, a cut-stem herbicide treatment is an effective method of control. Using cut stump method lessens risk of injuring neighboring plants during application. The most effect control strategy will integrate multiple control methods.

Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board with questions about herbicide application.

