

Euphorbias Two

Euphorbia milli, commonly known as Crown-of-Thorns, got its name from the Baron Milius. Baron Milius was the governor of the Island of Bourbon. He introduced this species in France in 1821.

The common name refers to the legend that the crown of thorns that was worn by Christ at his Crucifixion was made from the stems of this plant. Substantial evidence exists that the species was native to Madagascar and was taken to the Middle East before the time of Christ.

This large colorful family of *Euphorbiaeace* encompasses such a wide range of plant forms that a collector could keep busy for a lifetime. Crown-of-thorns resembles a spiny shrub, with green leaves and tiny red, white or bi-colored flowers, grouped in clusters. The plant is not hardy in the Northwest, but grows well indoors if given good light.

This forgiving plant does not require deadheading to produce flowers year round. As forgiving as the plant may be, it must have soil with good drainage and minimal water. A mixture of potting soil with vermiculite or perlite will help to produce a successful specimen. To promote good drainage, place gravel or styrofoam peanuts in the bottom of the pot. So, what could be easier?

Euphorbia cotinifolia, (common name Caribbean Copper Plant) is a deciduous tropical shrub that can grow to 15 feet in height or can be trained as a small tree. Coppery-purple thin-fleshed leaves grow from flexible purplelish stems. Loose flower clusters have small white to pale yellow bracts in the spring.

Euphorbia cotinifolia is not cold tolerant. If planted outside it must be in an area protected from frost. This plant is far less forgiving than the *E. milli*. It will require light shade on the hottest summer days. Too much heat and the leaves shrivel up. Good drainage will help sustain the beautiful coppery color. Refrain from watering overhead, again to protect the leaves. Given these few precautions, this tender perennial will provide a delightfully colored plant with minute flowers.



Scientific Name: *Euphorbia cotinifolia*

Common Name: [Red Spurge](#)

Family Name: Euphorbiaceae

Photo by: [Forest & Kim Starr \(USGS\)](#)

Euphorbia cyparissias or Cypress Spurge is a herbaceous to semi-woody perennial that can grow to a foot or more in height. This plant has an extensive underground root system which allows it to reproduce via lateral root buds (rhizomes) that can spread rapidly to form a bushy ground cover.

The plant has numerous bright green linear leaves that are located alternately along the stem. The leaves are blue-green and narrow. The flowers open in May and can persist through August. The flower structure of *E. cyparissias* is complex. The flowers are located at the top of the plant. The true flowers appear in clusters and are small, and lack sepals or petals. These showy bracts are lime-yellow when young and age to purple-red.

The stems and leaves of the Cypress Spurge contain a milky latex sap as is the case with most members of the Spurge family. The latex may produce a severe dermatitis on susceptible individuals, much like poison ivy. Gardeners with sensitive skin should wear gloves. All who handle these plants should take special care not to rub their eyes.

This latex undoubtedly contributes to the protection of these plants from plant consuming organisms. The latex of some species has been used for arrow poisons which stupefy fish and allow them to be captured. Cypress Spurge should not be planted near stocked pools as the latex exuded from broken roots can be fatal to fish. The latex has also been used for medicinal purposes.

Although quite tolerant of poor soil, these plants are best grown in dry, well-drained soil in full sun. Cypress Spurge freely reseeds and can become particularly invasive in very rich moist soil. There are no serious insect or disease problems.

Resources

[Crown of Thorns Plant: Euphorbia Milii](#). Retrieved August 26, 2006

[Euphorbia cotinifolia Caribbean Copper Plant](#). Retrieved August 25, 2006

[Euphorbia cotinifolia - Caribbean Copper Plant](#). Retrieved August 25, 2006

[Mexican Shrubby Spurge, Red Spurge Euphorbia cotinifolia](#). Retrieved August 25, 2006

[Euphorbia cyparissias](#). (Photo) Retrieved October 2, 2006