

# Leafy spurge

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**Highly aggressive, deep-rooted perennial**

**One of the first plants to emerge in spring, head start on competition**

**Seedlings can emerge when temperatures are 33-34° F**

## **Habitat**

- Prefers undisturbed, dry noncropland
- Abandoned fields
- Range and pasture
- Woodlands and prairies
- Roadsides and wastelands

## **Flowers**

- Bright yellow blooms are actually leaf bracts
- Bracts appear in early May through July, possibly again in September
- Flowers are insect-pollinated

## **Seeds**

- Seed development continues 4-6 weeks after bract appearance
- Optimum temperature for germination is 86°-88°
- Germination rate is 60-80%
- Plants can produce up to 3400 lbs. of seed per acre
- Seed dispersal occurs in August (dehiscent)
- Seeds are expelled up to 15 feet from plant

## **Roots**

- Root system consists of shallow and deep roots, some 16-18 feet deep
- Buds can arise anywhere along roots, sending up vertical shoots
- Crown region of plant can produce roots and shoots

## **Shoots**

- Shoot growth occurs from crown and root buds
- Seedling shoots can develop buds 7-10 days after emergence

## **Growth and reproduction**

- Most aggressive growth occurs in semi-arid environments such as dry hillsides, dry prairies and rangeland
- Top growth can be killed, however regrowth can occur from root buds as deep as 12 feet
- Reproduction from rootstocks and seeds

## **Management**

- Mowing can increase the infestation by increasing competition
- Control must begin prior to establishment, or may not be possible
- Hand cutting at 4" height repeatedly, can inhibit seed production
- Herbicides: dicamba, diflufenzopyr, glyphosate, picloram, 2,4-D ester
- \* Picloram in late spring, 70% control \* Picloram + diflufenzopyr is best

## **Threats**

- Can decrease forage yield by as much as 100%
- Forms a monoculture, eliminating biodiversity
- Latex sap is dermally toxic

# **LEAFY SPURGE**



**young plant**



**milky sap**



**root buds**



**crown stems**



**fall color**



**leaf bracts/blooms**