



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226
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MYRTLE SPURGE

Euphorbia myrsinites

THREAT: Myrtle spurge, also known as donkey tail or creeping spurge, is a native to Eurasia. It was introduced to North America as an ornamental and is often used in rock gardens. This plant has escaped cultivation in some areas, invading disturbed, well-drained areas. Myrtle spurge is poisonous if digested, causing nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Additionally, the milky sap can cause swelling, redness and blistering of the skin, and, irritation to the eyes. Myrtle spurge is usually spread by seed, although root fragments can also produce new plants. It is a Class B Noxious Weed in Washington State.

DESCRIPTION: Myrtle spurge is a biennial or perennial. The plant grows from a taproot, with new stems emerging in early spring and dying back in the winter. Myrtle spurge has trailing stems, growing close to the ground. Stems and leaves are fleshy and grayish-green in color, and the leaves are attached to the stems in close spirals. Inconspicuous flowers, with showy yellowish bracts, are borne in clusters at the ends of the stems. Flowering occurs in March and April. Like other euphorbias, the plant contains a milky sap. Plants can grow up to 8-12 inches high and 12-18 inches in width.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Myrtle spurge can be controlled through chemical and mechanical means. Small infestations can be hand pulled or dug. As much root as possible should be removed and the area should be monitored in future years to prevent reinfestation. Care should be taken to prevent the sap from contacting skin or eyes. Contact the weed control board for site-specific chemical recommendations.

