Cypress Spurge  Perennial  

*Euphorbia cyparissias*

Erect herbaceous or semi-woody perennial, 6 – 12” tall. Spreads through lateral root buds, forming extensive colonies. All parts exude milky sap. Human contact with the plant can cause rashes; potentially toxic to horses & cattle.

**Where found:** Old gardens, meadows, pastures, roadways, coastal headlands, & wide range of other sunny & partly shady disturbed locations. Widely planted in cemeteries in past; often called Graveyard Weed.

Leaves bright green, alternate or whorled along stem, linear — up to 1” long & 1/16–1/8” wide. Leaves turn orangish in autumn.

Stems green with red base.

Flowers bright greenish-yellow, turning purple-red, clustered at top of plant, May–August. Flowers are small & lack petals or sepals.

**Similar native plant:** None.

Harpwell Invasive Plants Partnership, 2017 (5/2017)  
[Sources: USDA Forest Service (www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants); Invasive Plant Atlas of the United States; Photos: Pixabay, Shutterstock.]
Cypress Spurge (Euphorbia cyparissias) Best Control Practices:
First, read the FAQs (see last page) to guide your decisions on How, When, Why, and What control efforts. Then proceed with the following:

- Pull, grub or dig monthly during spring/summer. Repeat for years. Reproduces by roots, rhizomes, and seeds, making it very difficult to eradicate. Herbicides are not dependable.

Note:
Milky latex may cause skin blistering and intensely irritate eyes. Wear gloves.

Source:

FAQs: To eliminate or control invasive plants in Harpswell?

Choosing a control strategy

Choosing a control strategy requires careful thought as to the size and severity of the infestation and its proximity to water and other natural resources. The Harpswell Invasive Plant Partnership (HIPP) urges landowners to use mechanical (as opposed to chemical) controls whenever possible. Herbicide application within 25 feet of the water is not allowed in Harpswell. Check the Town of Harpswell’s Pesticide Ordinance.

Why control invasive plants?

Infestations of invasive plants damage the lands and waters that native plants and animals need to survive. They out-compete and displace native plant species. Livestock avoid grazing on many invasives (thistles/euphorbia, black swallow-wort), encouraging spread. Invasive seeds may also contaminate hay. Some invasives shelter mice, so increase the numbers of ticks (barberries), and others yield poisonous chemicals (euphorbia, black swallow-wort) that can affect human and animal health. Some invasive roots exude chemicals that poison neighboring plants (knapweed, black swallow-wort).

When is the best time to control invasive plants?

There isn’t one season that works perfectly for all invasives. When trying to prevent invasives from entering the seed-spreading period, manually attack them any time you can. But, when chemicals are needed, leaf-spraying must be done on green leaves, while the cut-and-paint stem applications are only effective during the late season, not when sap is actively flowing. Be sure to follow the guidelines advised on HIPP’s website to time your efforts.

Why avoid chemical herbicides?

The most commonly-used herbicides for invasive plant control are glyphosate (Roundup) and Triclopyr (Garlon 4 and 3A). Glyphosate is known to be mildly toxic to bees, which are already threatened. Triclopyr is slightly toxic to birds, fish, and aquatic invertebrates, and can cause severe eye damage.

Why use chemicals?

Sometimes, cautiously using herbicides is less disturbing to the environment than other possible control methods. At other times, the plant infestation is too large or dense to realistically remove mechanically. If chemicals are needed, follow professional advice for when and how much chemical to use. Using chemicals that are mixed too strongly can damage the visible leaves while never seeping into the root structure to kill the plant.

When using chemicals why not just use Roundup (or Triclopyr) for all the invasives?

Neither Roundup nor Triclopyr works reliably for every invasive plant. Following the guidelines advised on HIPP’s website will help you choose the right herbicide for the job, save you money, and minimize environmental damage.

Harpswell Invasive Plant Partnership Plant Fact Sheets
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