

Euphorbia Maculata Spotted Spurge

by Lisa Marie Gee and C.A. Harlos

Spotted spurge is a summer annual. A summer annual refers to an annual which completes its entire life cycle from seed germination to flower formation to new seed production beginning in late spring or early summer and maturing and dying in the autumn. The plant is native to the Eastern United States. It thrives in full sun. It acts as a pioneer species in ecological succession being one of the first plants to colonize a bare area.

This plant grows close to the ground and often forms a dense mat up to three feet in diameter. It has dark green leaves measuring 1/8-1/2 inch long. The leaves grow in opposite pairs. Frequently there is a dark spot in the center of the leaf. The flowers of spotted spurge are located in the leaf axils. They are tiny and pink with stamens and pistils grouped in small flower-like cups called cyathia. The fruit of spotted spurge is a three-celled seed capsule 1/16th inch or less. Each cell contains one seed. The root is a tap root. The flowers, fruit, stems and leaves are hairy. Broken stems and branches

secrete a milky poisonous sap which is an eye and skin irritant. This is a trait common to other members of the same family *Euphorbiaceae* which also includes poinsettias.

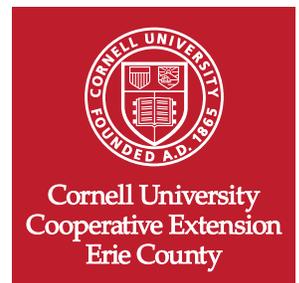
You may have seen prostrate spurge growing in crevices, near boulevards and in parking lots.

The seeds germinate between 60-100 degrees Fahrenheit but the most successful germination occurs between 75-85 degrees Fahrenheit. Seed exposure to light also increases germination.

Although a native species, this plant is unpopular with gardeners probably because it has no aesthetic appeal. It takes nourishment from more attractive species which gardeners welcome to their gardens.

Management of this weed involves prevention. For example, new plants can grow from the taproot so dig it up! Gardeners should also use weed free seeds and uncontaminated planting stock. Work clothing and implements used in

gardening should be kept clean. Remove plants as soon as you see them. Make sure to wear gloves as the sap is a skin irritant. Solarization of the planting area with clear plastic for 4-6 weeks before planting can kill off some seeds. Mulching the area prevents light from reaching the seeds. Post emergent herbicides can also be utilized, but always read the product label to make sure it will treat for spotted spurge and follow all directions. 🌱



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