

Leafy Spurge



Found most often in open areas such as pastures. Spreads rapidly in drier soils. Herbaceous perennial with deep root systems and milky sap in stems, flowers, and leaves. Sap is distasteful to some animals and can cause blistering on their mouths or throats. Leafy spurge grows to be 2-3' tall.

Leaves

Alternate, small, oblong to lance-shaped, on the upper part of stem; scale-like on the lower part of stem.

Flowers

Small, yellowish-green, and surrounded by cup-shaped bracts. Flowers are paired, with 7-10 pairs clustered in umbels at tops of stems. Bloom late spring through mid-summer.

Fruits & seeds

Each flower produces a lobed capsule containing 3 seeds. When the stem matures, the capsules explode, projecting seeds up to 15 feet. Each plant can produce more than 250 seeds. Seeds remain viable in the soil for up to 8 years. Dispersed by wildlife, humans, and water.

Roots

Extensive root system with taproots extending up to 15' deep and lateral roots spreading up to 35'. New sprouts from root buds facilitate spread into undisturbed areas.

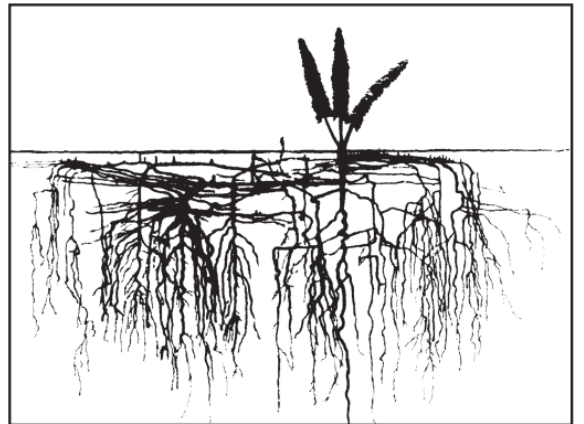
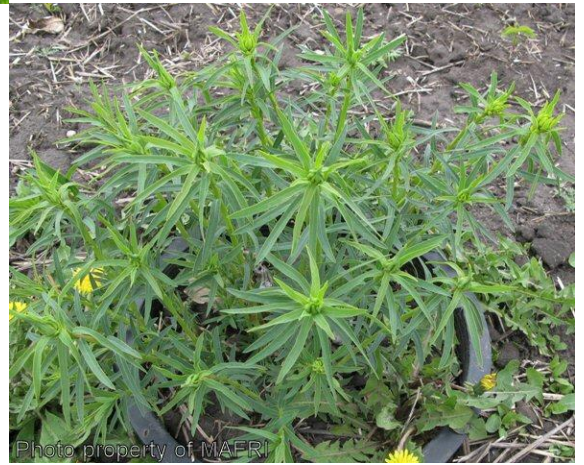


Figure 5. Root system of a two-year-old leafy spurge



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