

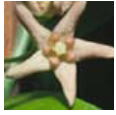


Invasive Plant Atlas of New England

Catalog of Species Search Results

Euphorbia cyparissias

(Cypress spurge)



[:: Catalog of Species Search](#)



[Common Name\(s\)](#) | [Full Scientific Name](#) | [Family Name Common](#) | [Family Scientific Name](#) | [Images](#) | [Synonyms](#) | [Description](#) | [Similar Species](#) | [Reproductive/Dispersal Mechanisms](#) | [Distribution](#) | [History of Introduction in New England](#) | [Habitats in New England](#) | [Threats](#) | [Early Warning Notes](#) | [Management Links](#) | [Documentation Needs](#) | [Additional Information](#) | [References](#) | [Data Retrieval](#) | [Maps of New England Plant Distribution](#)

COMMON NAME

Cypress spurge

FULL SCIENTIFIC NAME

Euphorbia cyparissias L.

FAMILY NAME COMMON

Spurge family

FAMILY SCIENTIFIC NAME

Euphorbiaceae

IMAGES



Close-up of flowers



Habit



Fruits



Incursion

Rhizomes

NOMENCLATURE/SYNONYMS

Synonyms: *Galarhoeus cyparissias* (L.) Small ex Rydb.
Tithymalus cyparissias (L.) Hill

DESCRIPTION

Botanical Glossary

Euphorbia cyparissias is an herbaceous to semi-woody perennial that is 15-30 cm (6-12 in.) tall. This plant has an extensive underground root system which allows it to reproduce vegetatively via lateral root buds. When broken, the stems and leaves exude a white latex that characterizes this plant family. The plant has numerous bright green linear leaves that are located alternately along the stem and in whorls where they subtend the inflorescence. The leaves are 1-3 cm (0.4-1 in.) long and 1-3 mm (0.04-0.1 in.) wide.

The flowers open in May and can persist through August. The flower structure of *E. cyparissias* is complex. The flowers are located in a cyme at the top of the plant. The true flowers are small, and lack sepals or petals. They are clustered in a structure called a cyathium which consists of many staminate flowers (male) clustered around one pistillate flower (female). This cyathium is in turn enclosed by an involucre that has four horned glands that are yellow green when young and turn to an orange brown with age. From this involucre come two cordate (heart-shaped) bracts which are a conspicuous bright yellow green turning to purple red as they age. The bracts are 4-6 mm (0.25 in.) wide. The fruit is three lobed and contains 1-3 egg shaped smooth gray seeds that measure 1.5-2 mm (0.08 in.).

Page References Bailey 618, Fernald 968, Gleason & Cronquist 338, Holmgren 317, Magee & Ahles 703, Newcomb 408, Peterson & McKenny 162,374. See reference section below for full citations.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Euphorbia esula L. (Leafy spurge)

E. esula is another invasive species that looks similar to *E. cyparissias*. The most obvious difference between these two plants is that *E. esula* is much taller and more robust than *E. cyparissias*. *E. cyparissias* has many more linear shaped leaves that measure 1-3 mm wide (0.04-0.1 in.) as opposed to the fewer and wider (3-8 mm (0.1-0.3 in.)) leaves of *E. esula*. Finally, *E. cyparissias* has smaller bracts than *E. esula*.

REPRODUCTIVE/DISPERSAL MECHANISMS

Euphorbia cyparissias can reproduce both sexually and vegetatively.

Some of the plants in the United States and Canada are in fact sterile, though there are reports of both types of plants in New England. There is some evidence that the plants are self-sterile, thus colonies that are offspring of a single seed are barren, while colonies that are from multiple seeds are reproductive. The fruit of *E. cyparissias* are explosively dehiscent, and seeds are known to be dispersed by ants. The plant reproduces vegetatively via lateral root buds, forming extensive clonal populations.

DISTRIBUTION

Euphorbia cyparissias is found from England to Siberia, though the actual native range of this plant in Eurasia is not known. In the United States, this plant has been reported from all states with the exception of Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. It has been reported from all New England states.

HISTORY OF INTRODUCTION IN NEW ENGLAND

It is not known exactly how *E. cyparissias* was introduced into New England. It was likely introduced from England into North America as an ornamental at sometime in the mid-1800s. It was noted by Gray (1867) to have escaped from gardens and naturalized in Essex County, Massachusetts. It was introduced into Ontario, Canada in 1870.

HABITATS IN NEW ENGLAND

Abandoned Field
Agricultural Field
Edge
Open Disturbed Area
Pasture
Railroad Right-of-Way
Roadside
Utility Right-of-Way
Vacant Lot
Yard or Garden

Euphorbia cyparissias is most often found in old fields and natural grasslands.

THREATS

Euphorbia cyparissias is most often a threat along edges, in yards and other severely disturbed areas. This plant can be present in huge numbers in some of these disturbed areas. The capability of this plant to reproduce vegetatively makes it a greater threat than if it were dependent on seeds for reproduction. *Euphorbia cyparissias* is considered to be an agricultural pest because it is potentially toxic to horses and cattle. Humans can also be sensitive to the latex contained in the plant.

MANAGEMENT LINKS

[Euphorbia cyparissias biocontrol in Rhode Island](#)

[Agriculture and Agri-Food, Canada](#)

Information about biocontrol of *E. cyparissias* and *E. esula*

DOCUMENTATION NEEDS

Documentation required: A photograph of an inflorescence with leaves

Best time for documentation: Late spring, summer, fall

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Integrated Taxonomic Information System](#)

Taxonomic information about the species

[PLANTS Database](#)

General information and map

[Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs](#)

Short descriptive and control information

[Virginia Tech Weed Identification Guide](#)

Brief descriptions and images

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DATA RETRIEVAL

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- Formatted display as table
- Export as comma-delimited text file

MAPS OF PLANT DISTRIBUTION IN NEW ENGLAND

Select a study area by clicking the radio button and then click "Submit Selection."

- The whole New England area
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- One or more counties
- One or more towns (county sub-divisions)

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