

Botanical name: *Euphorbia maculata* syn *Chamaesyce maculata*

Common name: Spotted Spurge, Caustic weed, Eyebane, Milk Purslane, Milk Spurge, Prostrate Spotted Spurge, Prostrate Spurge, Red Caustic-creeper, Spotted Pursley, Spotted Sandmat, Spotted Mat-spurge, , Spurge,

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Origin: North America

Habit: Garden beds, footpaths, lawns, parks, roadsides, disturbed sites and waste areas

A small, annual herbaceous plant with several prostrate to semi-upright stems growing up to 30 cm long. Plants grow low to the ground in a mat-like fashion approx. 10-17 cm tall.



The stems are usually reddish in colour and covered in small soft hairs. The stems and leaves contain milky sap (latex). The leaves are small, oblong, elliptic or elongated, with a rounded serrated tip and arranged in pairs and borne on very short petioles. The leaves are glabrous (hairless), with green uppers with a brownish or purplish spot in the centre.

Tiny flowers are grouped into small cup-like structures (cyathia). The cyathia are produced singularly in the leaf forks and borne on stalks and each consists of a small cup-like structure (involucre) with five minute teeth and four small white or pinkish petal-like appendages (glands). They have four or five male flowers, each consisting of a single stamen and a single female flower, consisting of a large stalked ovary. The tiny hairy capsules have three compartments each containing a single seed.



Reproduction is only by seed which is dispersed by wind, water, vehicles in soil or contaminated agricultural produce.

Spotted spurge is mat-like in nature so hand pulling is a good option for removal from the lawn or flower beds. Remove before the plant has a chance to develop seeds as it will spread rapidly. As it is a *Euphorbia* they should be handled with care. Remove any regrowth that will start to grow for its tap root. Eventually the tap root will use up all of its stored energy trying to regrow and will die completely.

Herbicides work well but only on young plants once they reach a mature size, they can resist many forms of weed killers. Best use herbicides in late spring or early summer when these plant first sprout. Non-selective herbicides work best but several applications will be required. Pre-emergent sprays or granules can also be used, but these will only be effective before the seeds have sprouted.

Solarization of the soil will kill the spotted spurge and its seeds but will also kill anything else in the soil.

Heavily mulching with either newspaper or wood mulch is also an effective method of spotted spurge control. This will prevent the spotted spurge weed seeds from germinating and will also smother any plants that have already started growing.

(Sources: *Gardening Know How: Tips for Spotted Spurge Control*; *Brisbane City Council Weed Identification tool*)