

WHY ARE NOXIOUS WEEDS SO DANGEROUS?

Noxious weeds are plants that are not native to Colorado and are mandated by law to be controlled. They have no natural enemies here to control their populations. Their seeds are easily spread by wind, water, tires, clothing, plus domestic and wild animals. Once noxious weeds become established in a natural area, they crowd out surrounding native plants by stealing precious moisture, nutrients, and sunlight. This change in the plant community harms the local wildlife community. Without the native plants they depend on, native wildlife numbers can drop drastically in weed-infested areas.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Myrtle spurge is an ornamental that some people once planted in their yards. It is a perennial that produces new stems from the taproot each year. The plants are 4 to 6 inches tall, have trailing stems, and fleshy, blue-green, triangle-shaped leaves. In the spring they produce clusters of small yellow flowers on top of each stem.



Myrtle spurge is not only dangerous to native plants and wildlife, **it is dangerous to you and your family**. The most common victims of myrtle spurge are children who unassumingly pick the pretty flowers. Myrtle spurge produces a toxic, milky latex which **causes severe blister-like burns if it touches your skin**. If it gets in your eyes, seek medical attention!

Myrtle spurge has been found in many neighborhoods. Public land agencies are removing myrtle spurge from their properties and require you to do the same.

IT'S AGAINST THE LAW

The Colorado Noxious Weed Act, §§ 35-5.5-101 – 119, C.R.S. (2003), designates myrtle spurge as a Class A Noxious Weed that must be eradicated. It is a violation of this law to allow myrtle spurge to “produce seed or develop other reproductive propagules.” To read the complete act, visit:

www.ag.state.co.us

HOW CAN YOU COMPLY WITH THE LAW?

- *Remove myrtle spurge by digging up mature plants and pulling new seedlings.
- *To protect yourself from the toxic sap, wear gloves, long sleeves, pants, and eye protection when handling this plant.
- *If the plants are in flower, bag them carefully and put in the trash or take to a solid waste landfill.
- Do not compost!**
- *Do not buy or plant myrtle spurge. It is illegal to sell it in Colorado.
- *If you see myrtle spurge on public or private lands, report it to the proper landowner or agency.



Photo courtesy of the City of Boulder OSMP Dept.