

# TACKLING Spurge Laurel

(*Daphne laureola*)

Invasive species have significant impacts on the environment, human health, infrastructure and the economy in the Metro Vancouver region.

Spurge laurel, an evergreen shrub from Eurasia, northern Africa and the Mediterranean regions, was introduced to North America as a garden plant. It is long-lived, able to spread long distances by seed, and commonly found growing in gardens or under trees in forests.

## IMPACTS

**Spurge laurel is highly toxic to both humans and animals. Poisoning can occur through skin contact, breathing in sap droplets, and ingesting any part of the plant. As few as 2-3 berries can fatally poison a child.** This plant can spread quickly at woodland sites, reducing sunlight levels and competing with native plants.

## IDENTIFICATION

- **Lifecycle:** Evergreen shrub, plants can live longer than 40 years
- **Stems:** Thin, green turning to greyish-brown with ageing; 0.4-1.5 metres tall; mature plants may have many stems branching from the base
- **Leaves:** Evergreen, thick, waxy, and shiny, growing in a spiral pattern at the end of stems
- **Flowers:** Small, fragrant, but malodorous tube-shaped, pale yellow-green flowers from January to April
- **Seeds:** Small round berries with a single seed, turning from green to purple-black as they ripen; some birds and rodents eat the berries and spread seeds
- **Roots:** Orange in colour



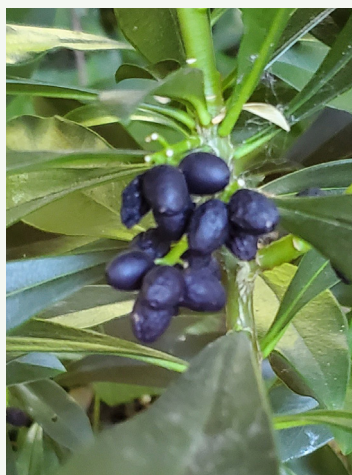
Stem

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Flowers & leaves

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Berries

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The root collar (indicated by the arrow) is the place on the stem where the roots begin to flare out

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## CONTROL METHODS

Effective invasive plant management typically involves a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling spurge laurel on private property or where permission has been granted by the land owner or manager. Other methods may be used by professionals. **It is best to hire a professional to manage spurge laurel infestations. Protective gear (gloves, goggles or a face shield, long sleeved shirt and pants or waterproof suit, and possibly a respirator) should be used, as contact with the plant or vapours can cause skin and respiratory irritation.**

CONTROL METHOD	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual (with protective gear)	<b>Cutting the plant below the root collar (see photo on Page 1)</b>	Plants and sites of any size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut below the uppermost root coming off the stem (usually below the soil)</li> <li>• Plants can resprout from the stems if they are cut above the root collar</li> <li>• Some stems may lay on the ground and need to be pulled up before cutting to expose the base of the plant</li> </ul>
	<b>Cutting the tops off plants &lt; 2-3 years old</b>	Seedlings, young plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut the top spiral of leaves with hand pruners or loppers</li> <li>• Re-growth is possible</li> </ul>
	<b>Pulling or digging plants &lt; 15 centimetres tall</b>	Seedlings, young plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove as many of the roots as possible</li> <li>• May disturb the soil</li> <li>• Higher risk of exposure to sap and vapours compared to cutting</li> </ul>

**Remove plants offsite to eliminate the safety hazard.** Activities should take place before berries ripen to prevent seeds from forming. Most of the seeds in the soil will sprout within two to three years. Restore the area with native or non-invasive plants.

## How Can You Help?

- Do not touch suspected spurge laurel plants.
- Download the '**Report Invasives BC**' app to identify and report invasive species.
- Do not purchase, trade or grow spurge laurel.
- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out [growgreenguide.ca](http://growgreenguide.ca) for suggestions.
- Do not place spurge laurel in your backyard composter due to the risk of exposure. The temperature will also not become hot enough to completely destroy the seeds and roots.
- To reduce the spread of invasive species, dispose of yard waste and soil appropriately. Visit your municipality's website for more information.

For the complete set of best management practices for spurge laurel, and other key invasive species, visit [MetroVancouver.org](http://MetroVancouver.org) and search 'Invasive Species'.



Professionals wear personal protective gear when tackling spurge laurel

CREDIT: SEA TO SKY INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL