

TERRACINA SPURGE: A PROBLEM PEST PLANT IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Terracina spurge (*Euphorbia terracina*) is a toxic invader from Europe that has become established in the Palos Verdes Peninsula, Malibu, and surrounding coastal and inland communities. This plant causes serious problems once established by forming dense stands, excluding native plants, and causing a public health hazard.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY ABOUT TERRACINA SPURGE?

Terracina spurge causes a number of problems. It has toxic milky sap that causes temporary blindness if you get it in your eyes. Contact with its leaves and stems can cause a poison oak-like reaction in susceptible individuals. It does not stabilize slopes or prevent erosion as well as the native plants that it displaces. Terracina spurge is also poor forage and inferior habitat for animals like deer, rabbits, and birds. Terracina spurge spreads rapidly and forms dense stands excluding all other vegetation.



Mature Plant

DO YOU HAVE TERRACINA SPURGE IN YOUR BACKYARD?

Spurges can be recognized by their lime green leaves, red stems, and sticky white sap. You can separate Terracina spurge from other spurges based on its size (1-3 feet tall) and the small serrations on its leaf edge (the edge of the leaves look like the edge of a tiny

steak knife). Our native spurge and the other less problematic weedy spurges in Southern California are smaller and their leaf edges are smooth.

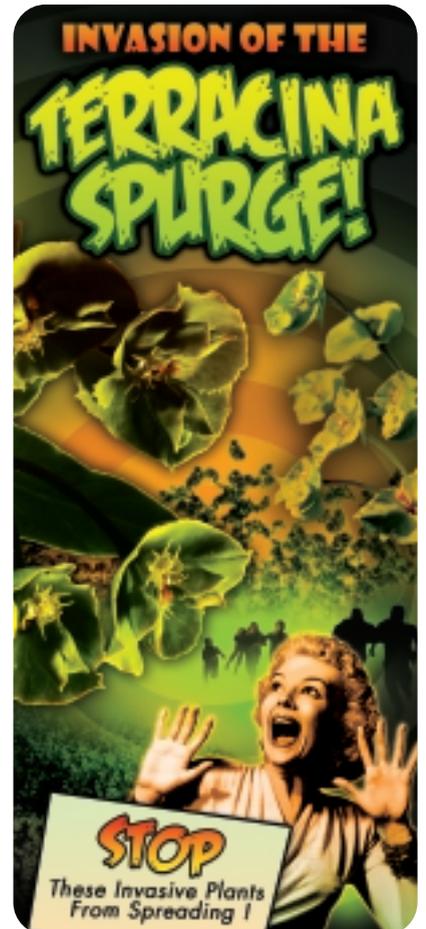


Stem

Flower

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO GET RID OF TERRACINA SPURGE?

Terracina spurge can be removed using a variety of methods. When the soil is soft, plants can be removed by hand pulling (while wearing gloves and long sleeves). Plants will not re-sprout as long as the top three inches of the root are removed. Plants can also be killed by spraying with a general herbicide such as Round-up. Any herbicide use should follow all applicable safety and environmental regulations. Terracina spurge has a large seedbank with seeds lasting in the soil for 3 to 5 years. You can prevent seed germination by applying a thick layer of mulch (5 inches or greater) or by using landscape cloth.



CONSIDER REPLACING TERRACINA SPURGE WITH NATIVE PLANTS OR NON-INVASIVE ORNAMENTALS

Native plants provide a number of benefits in home gardening including attracting birds, butterflies, and other wildlife, stabilizing slopes, and reduced water use. Information on gardening with native plants can be found by contacting your local California Native Plant Society chapter (www.cnps.org). Information on ornamental plants to avoid planting due to their tendency to escape into wildlands can be found at the California Invasive Plant Council webpage (www.cal-ipc.org).