

LOUISIANA HOME LAWN SERIES

A guide to maintaining a healthy Louisiana lawn



Spotted spurge

Description

Spotted spurge (*Euphorbia maculata* L.) is a warm-season annual weed common throughout Louisiana. It is adapted to a wide range of growing conditions and can be found growing in lawns, open areas in landscapes and sidewalk cracks. It spreads primarily through seeds, and a single plant alone can produce several thousand seeds. Seeds germinate in mid-spring, and plants are usually established by summer. Spotted spurge has a prostrate growth habit and forms dense mats close to the ground. Its prolific seed production makes it difficult to control in the lawn and landscape.



Spotted spurge

Identification

Spotted spurge leaves are small and oval-shaped with smooth edges. Red to purple leaf spots are found in the center of the leaves, which are oppositely arranged on stems. It produces small clusters of inconspicuous light-pink flowers at leaf axils on the stem. Spotted spurge's growth habit is prostrate and very low to the ground. Stems originate from one single point and grow horizontally to form a dense mat that can grow up to several feet in diameter. When its stems are broken, spotted spurge secretes a milky sap that can be toxic to some animals. For more information on Spotted spurge identification and characterization visit the USDA Plants Database at <https://plants.usda.gov>.



Spotted leaves



Flowers



Milky sap

Cultural Control Practices

The best way to prevent or reduce weed encroachment is to maintain a healthy lawn through regular mowing and proper fertilization and soil pH management. Properly maintaining a lawn through these cultural practices promotes dense and vigorous turfgrass and allows the lawn to better compete with weeds. Below are the recommended mowing heights and nitrogen fertility rates recommended for each turfgrass species. In addition to these lawn care practices, manual removal of weeds may also be necessary.

Turfgrass	Mowing height	Nitrogen Rate (per 1,000 ft ² per year)
Bermudagrass	1 - 2 inches	2 - 3 pounds
Centipedegrass	1 - 2.5 inches	0.5 - 2 pounds
St. Augustine grass	2.5 - 3 inches	1 - 3 pounds
Zoysia	1 - 2.5 inches	0.5 - 2 pounds

Chemical Control Practices

In addition to cultural practices, herbicide applications may be required to achieve effective weed control. Pre-emergence herbicides that control crabgrass are effective for managing spotted spurge. Apply metsulfuron when spotted spurge is observed in the lawn. Metsulfuron is more effective on young actively growing weeds. Follow-up applications may be necessary to achieve control. Populations of spotted spurge that are allowed to persist into late summer can be very difficult to manage. When using any type of herbicide, you must follow the manufacturer's labeled directions.

For more information regarding pesticides for turfgrass please reference the Louisiana Suggested Chemical Weed Control Guide at the LSU AgCenter website www.lsuagcenter.com.

	St. Augustine grass	Centipedegrass	Zoysia	Bermudagrass
Post-emergence Herbicide Active Ingredients				
metsulfuron-methyl	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pre-emergence Herbicide Active Ingredients				
pendimethalin	✓	✓	✓	✓
dithiopyr	✓	✓	✓	✓
prodiamine	✓	✓	✓	✓
isoxaben	✓	✓	✓	✓
indaziflam	✓	✓	✓	✓

For information regarding weed identification and control options please contact your local LSU AgCenter Extension Parish Office. To find your local LSU AgCenter Extension Parish Office visit www.lsuagcenter.com.

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