

Don't let them get away!

Invasive weeds are most effectively controlled when they and their numbers are small – a little weed control work today will save many dollars and days of work in years to come. As the area infested by sea spurge in Southern Tasmania is still relatively limited, now is the time to take action!

Community groups are actively involved in the eradication of sea spurge around the southern Tasmanian coastline. To get involved call the Parks & Wildlife Service Volunteer Facilitator for the south east region.

Control that weed!

Where many sea spurge seedlings occur in loose sand they can be controlled by raking. Mature sea spurge is best controlled by hand-pulling, or by digging them out if they are large – it's important that the stems are removed to a depth of at least 20 cm below the sand, otherwise they'll just resprout.

When sea spurge is growing in situations where hand-pulling is impossible (ie when very large, or growing out of rocky ground), it can be cut and painted with undiluted "frog friendly" glyphosate. Cut the stems as far down as possible, and paint them immediately with the herbicide. **Always read and follow the label**, wear protective equipment, and avoid off-target damage during chemical control.

Sea spurge maintains a persistent soil seed bank for at least five to ten years – sites will need to be checked twice a year to prevent seeding, and any new seedlings removed for effective control.

For further information consult the Parks & Wildlife Service website (www.parks.tas.gov.au/file.aspx?id=6447)

Beware – take care!

Sea spurge releases a toxic sap when stems are broken. Always wear sturdy plastic gloves to prevent the sap from contacting your skin. And be very careful not to rub it into your eyes – it can cause painful, temporary blindness.

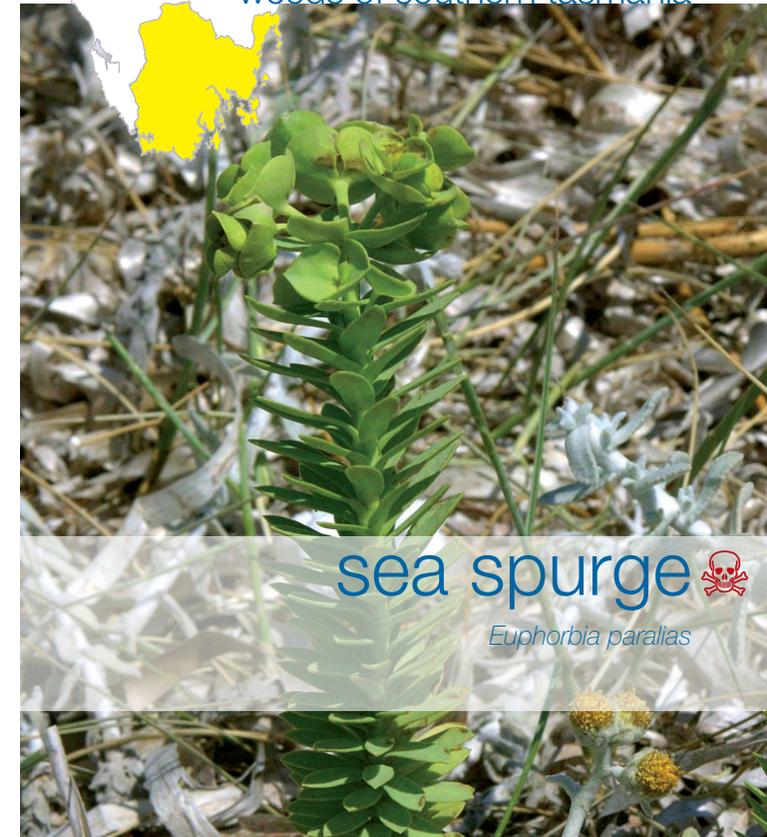
Do the right thing

Weed waste dumped in bushland or local reserves gives pest plants a leg-up into new areas. Do the right thing, and dispose of your weed waste responsibly. Non-seeding sea spurge can be simply pulled and left where it is. Plants bearing seeds or flowers should be securely bagged and burnt at an appropriate location. Consult your local fire authority.

Weeds are easily spread by contaminated machinery and people – check your clothes, shoes and vehicles for soil or plant matter that could be carrying weedy plant seeds. Sea spurge has been spread to some beaches on boats, surf and beach gear – give your gear a good shake before leaving a sea spurge infested beach! And **never** drive through infestations.

Get informed

Sea spurge is a significant weed threat for Southern Tasmania, and not yet common on southern beaches. For more information, contact your local Council office or call the DPI/PWE on 1300 368 550.



Impacts

Toxic beach invader that alters local ecosystems, out-competes native plants and deprives shore birds of habitat

Current distribution in Southern Tasmania

East Coast (Friendly Beaches, Wineglass Bay, Maria Island, Spring Beach), Eaglehawk Neck (Pirates Bay area) and Carlton Beach/Carlton River mouth



weed warning

sea spurge



Background

Sea spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*) is a coastal plant native to many countries from northern Africa to Europe and western Asia. It was first observed in Australia in Albany in 1927, and quickly spread along the southern coast of Australia, carried along on the prevailing ocean currents. Sea spurge was first noted in Tasmania on the north-east coast in 1980. Since then, it has become entrenched on much of the State's northern and north-western coastline, and may be found dotted along the east coast.

Sea spurge poses a serious threat to Tasmania's coastline. It is a **transformer weed**, which means that it substantially alters environments that it invades. Sea spurge can invade patches of bare sand, and create sand dunes where previously none existed. It can form dense populations that deprive coastal birds of nesting habitat, and produces a toxic sap that is irritating to the eyes and skin. As well as colonising sand dunes, sea spurge can march up the beach and inland to invade adjacent grass and herb fields.

Sea spurge has buoyant seeds that are readily dispersed by tides and currents. Seeds can also be spread in boat ballast water, on beach equipment, or in contaminated sand.

This coastal pest plant is currently fairly limited in distribution in Southern Tasmania, with several groups working on eradicating it from the region ... but it has the potential to spread much further if vigilance is not maintained.

Get a positive ID

Sea spurge is a long-lived coastal plant, generally 20-70cm tall, but occasionally as tall as one metre. Stems sprout and die off annually from a woody root crown, and often branch towards their tips. The stems are relatively stout and fleshy (2-5cm thick), and contain a thick milky white sap (latex) that is irritating to the skin, and may cause blindness if rubbed in the eyes.

Leaves are also somewhat fleshy, bluish-green, variable in shape, but generally oval to oblong, with smooth edges. They are usually about 5-30mm long, 2-15mm wide, and sit crowded and overlapping along the stems. Towards the tips of the stems, leaves become more rounded or kidney shaped, encircling the plant's inconspicuous small green flowers. Seeds are produced in a capsule, which opens explosively when dry, shooting the seeds away from the parent plant into new territory.

Sea spurge is fairly distinctive, however, if you're unsure put on plastic gloves and carefully break off a stem – unlike any native coastal plant, sea spurge oozes a white toxic sap.

If you believe you have found a specimen of sea spurge, carefully collect a sample of it in a sealed bag (avoiding contact with the white sap) and contact your local Council office or a DPIPW representative.

Get involved

SpLATs (Spurge Local Action Team) are a group of WILDCARE members dedicated to eradicating sea spurge from the Southeastern coast of Tasmania. To join SpLATs go to www.wildcarea.org.au and follow the groups link to WILDCARE SpLATs.

...but don't get carried away!

Sea spurge occurs in areas where coastal birds nest. Avoid these areas between October to February.

**Weeds are a growing problem.
Act now – make a plan and make a start!**

Images:

1. Sea spurge flower head
2. Sea spurge stem and leaves
3. Sea spurge fruit