

# “B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant,  
but may have limited distribution in some counties

**Spurge laurel**  
**Daphne laureola**

**Other common names:** daphne, daphne-spurge, daphne-laurel

**USDA symbol:** DALA11  
**ODA rating:** B



**Introduction:** The Daphne family consists of 500 species mostly small shrubs or occasional herbs. Most members of the group produce stem fibers and a few are used for papermaking in Asia. Spurge laurel was planted throughout the Pacific Northwest for decades. It is a native in much of Western Europe and the southern countries of Eastern Europe. Southern British Columbia, especially southern Vancouver island and in the Vancouver area, have well-established populations of spurge laurel. In Washington State, many west-side counties have escaped populations near urban areas. The hard seeds are consumed by birds and transported off-site

**Distribution:** Oregon spurge laurel infestations are increasing. The largest infestations are located in Yamhill, Douglas and Benton counties.

The Columbia River Gorge also contains outbreaks of the weed. Deciduous forests are the perfect habitat providing partial shade for the shrubs though conifer forests are equally suitable especially along the edges.

**Description:** Spurge laurel is an attractive ornamental plant known for its spiraling evergreen leaves and greenish-yellow, bitter-fragrant flowers. Larger patches emit an unpleasant odor. Flowering occurs in late winter-early spring, producing clusters of blue berries during the spring. The one-seeded drupes are eaten and dispersed widely by birds and small mammals. Shrubs reach a height of 0.5-1.5 meters. This weed tolerates low light levels from partial to deep shade. It prefers better-drained clay loams and forest loams with neutral to acidic soils. Escaped populations form dense stands mostly under tree canopies.

**Impacts:** Escaped populations from ornamental plantings continue to expand into forested areas especially adjacent to urban areas. As birds further disperse seeds, more habitats will be invaded and native plant communities altered. Oak woodland forests are the greatest at-risk forests because of this and other aggressive weed species. Most plant parts are toxic to humans and contain toxic compounds. Contact with the sap can cause skin irritation and ingestion of the seeds can cause poisoning especially in young children

