



Spurge laurel bears clusters of small, tubular, yellow-green flowers with orange stamens from late January to May. The clusters are mostly hidden under the top whorl of leaves at the ends of branches. While sometimes noted as being highly fragrant, local populations rarely have any noticeable fragrance.



Birds are attracted to the small, olive shaped berries. They consume them and then deposit the seeds in other areas. The berries are green, ripening to black by early June. While birds can eat the berries with no ill effect, the berries are highly toxic to other animals, including humans.



Seedlings emerge from the forest floor and begin to flower as early as their second year. Plants can thrive in dense shade and increase in numbers until they out-compete native vegetation for light, moisture and nutrients, eventually dominating the understory, altering native plant communities and reducing biodiversity.

# Spurge Laurel: A Growing Problem



## What is it?

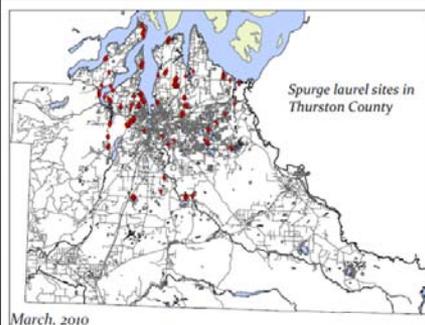
Spurge laurel (*Daphne laureola*) is an evergreen shrub that grows up to 3-4 feet tall. Whorls of dark green, shiny, leathery leaves grow at the ends of the branches. Leaves are oblong in shape, 1-5 inches long and 1/2 to 1 inch wide. Spurge laurel blooms in late winter and early spring, producing small (less than 1/2 inch long) tubular, yellow-green flowers. The flowers, which are sometimes fragrant, grow in small clusters at the base of leaves, near the tops of the stems. Oval, black berries are produced in early summer.

## Why is it a threat?

- Escaped garden ornamental, it invades neighborhoods, roadsides, parks and wooded areas, replacing native understory plants in forested areas.
- Tolerates a wide range of environmental conditions and can form large single-species stands.
- Reproduces both by seed and vegetatively from lateral roots. Birds aid in seed dispersal
- All parts of the plant are poisonous to humans and other mammals. The plants also produce a caustic sap that can cause severe skin and eye irritation. Always wear protective clothing, gloves and eye protection, and never transport plants or cut plant material inside an enclosed vehicle. The caustic compounds can also cause respiratory irritation.

## What can you do?

- Don't plant it. Plant alternatives such as Winter daphne, rhododendrons, or natives like Oregon grape.
- Remove plants from your yard and garden. Bag them and take to a waste and recovery center. **Please do not put into compost or yard waste recycling.**
- Learn to recognize escaped plants and report them to the Noxious Weed Control staff.



An escaped garden ornamental, spurge laurel spreads through neighborhoods and parks where there is an increased threat of children and pets coming into contact with the plants and berries. Keep children away from infested areas.



Many places in Thurston County provide ideal habitat for spurge laurel. Often found in mixed forest settings where madrona and Douglas fir are present, it is also found in wooded areas with other escaped ornamentals and invasive plants such as, English Laurel, Holly and Ivy, whose berries are also utilized by birds.



Spurge laurel plants blend in with both native and other ornamental plants, making initial location and identification difficult. There are many look-alikes including some rhododendrons, especially *Rhododendron saphnoides*, Lily-of-the-Valley Shrub, *Pieris japonica*, and it's close cousin, Winter Daphne, *Daphne odora*.