



(LEFT: SPURGE DAPHNE, RIGHT: TREE LUPINE)

Photo © by Adolf Ceska

INVASIVE ALIENS FROM THE GARDEN: Spurge Daphne and Tree Lupine

Often referred to as “alien” or “non-native”, an invasive plant is the name for a species that has become a weed, grows and spreads aggressively, displacing native plants. Most invasive plants were brought here by people from other continents, but escaped from gardens and now threaten local ecosystems.

Spurge daphne and Tree lupine are two invasive plants that make Victoria their home. Learn how to identify these aliens, what makes them invasive, and how to safely remove them from your garden and community.

Spurge Daphne

Daphne laureola

Other names:

Daphne, Daphne-laurel, Laurel-leaved daphne, Olive-spurge, Wood laurel, Copse laurel

CAUTION:

Spurge daphne is a poisonous plant that contains toxins in its berries, stem, leaves, and sap, which cause severe eye and skin irritation.

When handling Spurge daphne:

- Use extreme caution and always wear protective coveralls, gloves and goggles (launder after use)
- Never transport cuttings or plants inside an enclosed vehicle as sap droplets in the air can cause respiratory irritation.

How To Apply First Aid

If sap comes in contact with skin, flush immediately with water. If a persistent rash develops, consult a physician. Over the counter inflammatory creams may help reduce skin irritation.

If sap enters eyes, flush immediately with water and consult a physician.

If sap or berries are eaten, immediately consult a physician.

Description

Spurge daphne is an evergreen shrub. Its dark green leaves are shiny on top and lighter on the bottom, and grow in spiral-like rings around the stem. Fragrant, greenish-yellow fluted flowers grow in clusters at the tips of its branches from late winter to early spring, and develop into small black berries by early summer.

Spurge daphne is often mistaken for a rhododendron in gardens or thought to be a native species in local forests. Branches readily sprout from the base of older stems, often growing horizontally for a short distance before turning upwards.

What Makes It Invasive?

Spurge daphne can rapidly colonize an area, invading and taking over roadsides, shady Douglas fir forests and Garry oak woodlands. Spurge daphne is a long-lived, slow growing shrub that reproduces by seed and through the production of root sprouts. By eating its berries, birds help distribute this plant beyond the garden. Spurge daphne forms thick patches that block out sunlight, out-compete native plants for water and nutrients, and alter soil chemistry. Its leaves, bark, and berries are toxic to humans, dogs, and cats.

How To Control It

In natural areas, hand-pulling followed by the planting of native species is best. Small plants can be pulled, while larger plants should be carefully cut beneath the soil, below the point where there is a visible colour change from brown stem to orange root. Spurge daphne stems that are cut above the surface will re-sprout, so repeated site visits are necessary. When removing cut plants, bag the debris to avoid spreading berries to new sites. Do not compost its berries as the seeds will germinate.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Parks Division, Parks, Recreation and Community Development

T 250.361.0600

E parks@victoria.ca

1 CENTENNIAL SQUARE, VICTORIA, BC V8W 1P6 | www.victoria.ca

Alternatives To Spurge Daphne

There are a variety of native and non-native alternatives to Spurge daphne that do well in shade, and provide evergreen groundcover, fragrance, and berries for wildlife, without becoming invasive and a threat to local ecosystems.

Native Shrubs



Evergreen Huckleberry

Vaccinium ovatum

This slow growing, native evergreen shrub has small, deep green leaves that can turn bronze

in winter. Clusters of white bell-shaped flowers in spring are followed by tasty, dark blue berries. Evergreen huckleberry has high ornamental value in any garden but grows well as a low hedge, foundation planting, background plant or in a woodland garden. It grows in sun and part shade, likes moist soils and grows 1.5 – 2 metres high and 1 – 2 metres wide.



Salal

Gaultheria shallon

This shrub is one of the most common native species in the Pacific Northwest. Its glossy, evergreen leaves are

commonly used in cut flower arrangements. Salal has small, white, bell-like flowers in spring, followed by edible blue berries. It can be used as an informal hedge, screen, foundation or background plant, and in woodland gardens or native plant restoration. Salal thrives in part to full shade, dry and moist conditions, and grows 1 – 5 metres tall/wide.



Dull Oregon grape

Mahonia nervosa

This short, native evergreen shrub or groundcover has green or dark red holly-like leaves. Clusters of yellow

flowers bloom from May – June, followed by clusters of blue-ish purple grape-like berries that make an interesting jam or jelly. Dull Oregon grape is suitable for

dry to moist soils and shaded areas. When planted in masses, it creates a beautiful evergreen carpet under conifer trees. It grows 60 centimetres tall/wide.



Sword fern

Polystichum munitum

A low maintenance plant for any West Coast garden, this native evergreen fern will grow

under cedar trees and in deep shade. Once established, a Sword fern requires little or no watering, and will provide year-round visual interest. It is suitable for large plantings, woodland gardens, forest restoration and erosion control. Sword ferns like dry to moist soils and grow .5 – 1.5 metres tall/wide.

Non-Native Shrubs



Choisya

Choisya ternata

Choisyas are evergreen shrubs that closely resemble Spurge daphne. They are compact, evergreen,

and in the spring, provide clusters of fragrant white flowers which can bloom again in late summer. Their fragrance and foliage attract insects and birds. Choisyas grow in dry to moist soils both in part sun and in part to full shade. They grow 80 centimetres – 2 metres tall/wide.



Rhododendrons

Rhododendron sp.

Rhododendrons are extremely variable in height, form, leaf size and flower colour. Flowers are produced in

early spring and range in shades of white, yellow, pink and red. The abundant flowers and evergreen nature of this plant makes it an attractive choice for individual or mass plantings. Rhododendrons like moist, well-drained soil, part to full shade and can grow 60 centimetres – 5 metres tall/wide.

Tree Lupine

Lupinus arboreus



Other names:

Yellow bush lupine, Bush lupine, San Mateo bush lupine

Description

Tree lupine is a bushy, perennial shrub that grows up to 2 metres tall, usually with bright-yellow, sweet-smelling, pea-shaped flowers. Its palm-like, green leaves have 5 – 11 leaflets that are silver and hairy on the back. In Victoria, Tree lupine can be found along roadsides and on coastal bluffs. Flowers bloom from May – June.

Tree lupine is native to California where it is predominantly a dune species. Planted to control erosion, it is now considered harmful and invasive in this coastal environment.

What Makes It Invasive?

In Victoria, Tree lupine is choking out native species in coastal bluff habitats. It is a tough plant that thrives in poor, hot, dry soils in full sun. Tree lupine grows from seeds that are long-lived and form a persistent seedbank, making it difficult to control. Plants reach blooming size in two years and usually live for 5 – 7 years.

Once established, Tree lupine increases nitrogen levels in soils, encouraging the invasion of non-native grasses, while discouraging native plants which require low nitrogen soils.

How To Control It

In areas where native plants exist, hand-pulling followed by the planting of native species is best. No suitable chemical or biological controls have been found to be effective.