



Yachats Weed of the Month – March 2020

Spurge Laurel (*Daphne laureola*)

Spurge laurel is in fact neither a Spurge nor a Laurel. It is a Daphne, a group of plants having scented flowers and poisonous berries. Unlike the popular *Daphne odora*, spurge laurel is highly invasive in the Northwest where significant efforts have been made to curb its spread.

Impact: Spurge laurel is spread mainly by birds and rodents, which eat the berries. It gets into native forests around urban areas where it forms thickets that out-compete native plants in the understory, impacting habitat. In Portland, spurge laurel has been recognized as a problematic invasive weed. It is also quite widespread in Yachats, particularly in the area from the cemetery to the south. In a concerted effort to control it several years ago, many hundreds of plants were removed from along King Street. Most parts of the plant are toxic; skin exposure can lead to a rash and the berries can cause poisoning especially if eaten by small children, cats and dogs.

Identification: From a glance at the leaves and growth habit of spurge laurel, it would be easy to mistake it for a Rhododendron or a Euphorbia. The plants grow in clumps up to 5-ft in height. In our area the greenish flowers appear in January and February, and the berries form a month or two later. These allow for easy identification.

Management: Wearing gloves, dig up the plants with as much of the roots as possible. This is easiest when the soil is wet. Berries, if present, should be bagged. The other plant parts don't need special disposal. Be prepared to return at regular intervals in order to deal with new growths that are sure to appear.

Contact information: Call Wally at 541 606 0055 if you have any questions. For more weed info, go to www.yachatstrails.org.



Yachats "Weed of the Month" is an informational service of the Yachats Trails Committee and YIPS! - the Yachats Invasive Plants Subcommittee.