

*Euphorbia lathyris* L., GOPHER PLANT, CAPER SPURGE. Biennial herb, taprooted, rosetted, 1-stemmed at base, erect with branched reproductive canopy, in range 40–150 cm tall; monoecious; shoots with basal leaves (year 1) and cauline leaves (year 2), appearing glabrous and glaucous; latex white, copious. **Stems:** cylindric, to 20 mm diameter, often reddish, with slightly protruding leaf bases and brownish periderm; woody and hollow at base. **Leaves:** opposite decussate, simple, subsessile, without stipules; petiole < 0.5 mm long; blade symmetric, narrowly lanceolate or lanceolate to oblong, 30–150 × 5–25 mm, flat, ± earlike (auriculate) at base, entire (during water stress margins tending to inroll under), acute and short-pointed at tip, pinnately veined with raised pale midrib on lower surface, upper surface dark blue-green and lightly glaucous, lower surface lighter green and glaucous. **Inflorescence:** cyathium (= involucre with staminate flowers and 1 pistillate flower), terminal and axillary in leafy, cymelike arrays, terminal array with a solitary cyathium often failing to mature + 4 ascending peduncles (= 2 condensed nodes) having each peduncle subtended by a bract, axillary cymes oppositely paired, asymmetrically forked at the lowest node, to 8× forked with 1 cyathium at each node; bract subtending peduncle leaflike, slightly wider than neighboring cauline leaves; bracts subtending each fork 2, leaflike, subequal, ovate to triangular-ovate, 20–65 × 15–35 mm, somewhat decreasing upward, weakly cordate to truncate at base, entire, acute to acuminate at tip, typically glaucous; peduncle 60–90 mm long, rachis internodes decreasing upward; cyathium 6.5–8 mm across (including spreading glands); **involucre** bell-shaped, ± 4 mm long, green, of 5 bracts and 4 glands, the bracts of involucre fused most of length, with rounded tips, ca. 2 mm long, jagged and fringed on margins, the glands alternate with bracts (1 absent), nectar-producing, raised, crescent-shaped to oblong with circular lobed ends, 3.5–4 × 2–2.3 mm, fleshy, greenish yellow or greenish yellow and red, without appendages; staminate flowers 15–40, in 5 clusters, stalked, each cluster associated with a bractlet; bractlet threadlike, white, the stalk 3–3.5 mm long, flat, pubescent approaching tip; pistillate flower on a pedicel-like stalk (gynophore), at anthesis gynophore erect and 1 mm long increasing to > cyathium in fruit, with styles initially exposed from involucre, soon gynophore elongating and having mature ovary fully exerted. **Staminate flower:** reduced to 1 stamen; filament 0.3–0.8 mm long, flared at base; anthers conspicuously dithecal, 0.8 mm long, yellowish, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen yellowish. **Pistillate flower:** reduced to pistil; ovary superior, 6-lobed spheroid, < 3 mm, light green often with red base and glaucous, having a reddish purple stripe in each groove (over each chamber stripe sometimes obscure or incomplete), lobes rounded, glabrous and smooth, 3-chambered, each chamber with 1 ovule; styles 3, ± 3.5 mm long, green, 2-forked at or above midpoint, the branches twisting and flaring at tip, stigmatic on upper surface. **Fruit:** capsule, 3-seeded, 6-lobed subspheroid, 6–12 × 8–17 mm, glabrous, on drying becoming minutely bumpy, with spongy wall, elastically dehiscent along septa and chambers into 6 dry valves (some valve-pairs remaining attached at base) and expelling seeds. **Seed:** with fleshy appendage (caruncle), oblong, 4–7 × 3.2–4.5 mm, brown, with oblique flat spot below caruncle, surface netted ridged; caruncle initially 0.7 mm thick and 2 mm diameter, white, when dry mushroomlike with a tannish stalk. Early June–mid-July.

Naturalized. Biennial herb sometimes cultivated in private gardens and first recorded growing in disturbed grassland during late spring 2003 at Wildwood Region Park and also on the northwestern edge of Chatsworth Reservoir (SH), where small populations have persisted, but recently spotted elsewhere in range. *Euphorbia lathyris* is an interesting but potentially dangerous plant with very toxic latex, because its latex can cause skin rash or blisters and severe irritation to eyes. Probably this species should be eradicated immediately to prevent it from becoming an undesirable invasive.

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