

Euphorbia paralias – a serious threat to NZ dunes

E. paralias or ‘sea spurge’ is a dune shrub of Europe. Sea spurge seed was introduced to Australia in ballast water and it is now widespread across the south coast, from Perth to Tasmania. Sea spurge has not been recorded in New Zealand.

Sea spurge grows to approximately 70 cm. It has multiple stems covered in small, closely packed leaves. The plant has an overall blue/green color. The small flowers are green, and situated at the end of the stems. Flower stems die off each year (as opposite). This specimen is 1-2 years old.

Seeds may survive months or years in sea water and are likely to float across the Tasman Sea to New Zealand. The chance of this occurring will increase as the plant invades New South Wales.

Sea spurge should not be confused with the threatened native New Zealand shore spurge, *Euphorbia glauca*. The flowering stems of *E. glauca* do not die off; their stems are less erect and the arrangement of leaves is less symmetrical compared with sea spurge.



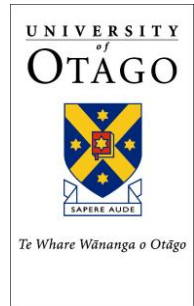
Courtesy Prof David Norton



Euphorbia paralias

Sea spurge forms dense stands in foredune and backdune habitats in Australia. It poses a serious threat to NZ's dune systems. Early detection offers the best chance of eradication. Take care - the milky sap is toxic.

Contact Dr Mike Hilton, the Department of Conservation, or your regional council, if you find or suspect sea spurge. Please do not disturb the plant.



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Euphorbia paralias
South Croppies Beach
Tasmania, 2001