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## Myrtle spurge, a weed found in northern Weber County, is no trifling matter

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Myrtle spurge is one of the more noxious weeds found in Northern Utah. The plant emits a milky sap that can cause blisters and burns on humans.

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When you start talking about noxious weeds in the State of Utah, it doesn't get much more noxious than myrtle spurge.

The attractive little succulent with the yellow flowers is listed as one of only five weeds that are prohibited in the state.

Joe Hadley, Weber County weed supervisor, says while myrtle spurge is not as widespread as many of the other weeds in Northern Utah, it deserves an honorable mention because of the inherent danger. The milky sap from the plant can cause significant blisters and burns in humans.

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"It's really dangerous to little children," Hadley said. "The sap will cause blisters on skin, and if kids get it in their eyes it can cause blindness."

Rod Kramer, outreach coordinator for Weber Pathways, said up until a few years ago, myrtle spurge was sold in nurseries as an ornamental plant. Since then, the state has banned the sale of *Euphorbia myrsinites*, based on it being "detrimental to human or animal health, the environment, public roads, crops, or other property."

Kramer says myrtle spurge is drought-resistant, and people had been using it for groundcover in their yards. He said it resembles the popular hens and chicks succulent.

And it's definitely not something to be trifled with.

"I had a friend who tried to clear out myrtle spurge from his garden and ended up in the emergency room after he rubbed his eyes," Kramer said. "It's a high level of irritation, for sure."

Hadley said there's getting to be "quite a bit of it" in Northern Utah. He references a large patch of myrtle spurge in the foothills above Pleasant View, near an irrigation canal. And Kramer says there are some "bad infestations" of the weed in North Ogden.

Hadley says he's particularly concerned because of the plant's proximity to a nearby gravel pit.

"If it gets into that gravel pit and the people mine the gravel, that gravel then goes to Uintah and other places," he said. "And so does the myrtle spurge."

It's very dangerous stuff, according to Hadley.

"And it's right here in our backyard."

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