

Vinca major (big leaf periwinkle) may take years to become invasive but with conditions of deep shade it can smother the diversity of other plants with its very dense vegetation. Cut it back or pull out the stragglers. Jasmine has the most beautiful fragrance, especially in the evening. A few cut blossoms perfume entire rooms, however, this vine twines around bushes and flora smothering the entire plant. It is critical to contain these plants and keep them in check by pruning and pulling out the ones growing in places you don't desire.

Which leads me to the worst invasive in my landscape – euphorbia esula, commonly known as green spurge or leafy spurge. A single pot of euphorbia is charming with its magnetic chartreuse leaves and yellowish green bracts. The problem begins when the seed capsules explode sending seeds 15 or more feet in the distance. If allowed in bare soil, the complex root system spreads rapidly both horizontally and vertically for many yards. In spring the plants grow 3 or 4 feet high, blocking sunlight, stealing the water and nutrients from other plants. Toxins in euphorbia esula prevent other plants to thrive. Deer and rabbits won't eat it, although goats and sheep tolerate it. The milky sap is a skin irritant to humans. If left unchecked, this invader will take over hills, dales, and neighborhoods. The striking euphorbia esula encompasses a hillside, yet I am not willing to let trespassers into my formal beds. Daily I patrol and pull out the intruders.

A cavalcade of color delights me in my spring garden. Currently boasting beautiful blooms are bergenia, lavender, ranunculus, Dutch iris, bearded iris, rose, forget-me-not, daffodil, tulip, calla lily, California poppy, snowball, snowdrop, blue star, geranium, calendula, citronella, hyacinth, ice plant, wisteria, lilac, snapdragon, cyclamen, oleander, Jupiter's beard, azalea, fuchsia, breath of heaven, camellia, hellebore, nasturtium, sweet alyssum, osteospermum, cornflag, clematis, mock orange, petunia, wood hyacinth, alpine strawberry, fava beans, and a plethora of other splendid multicolored species.

My gardener mom was right about being inclusive with garden color and watchful for the expansion of invasive vigorous vegetation. It is always good to have a guide on the side. Mother Nature will always have the final say.

I recently visited my daughter to help with her landscaping needs. When I asked her what she wanted me to plant, she responded, "Mom, you always know best!"

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