

## A Northern Nevada Homeowner's Guide to Identifying and Managing Common Purslane

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**Other common names:** Little hogweed, pigweed, parsley, wild portulaca, etc.

**Scientific name:** *Portulaca oleracea*

**Family:** Portulacaceae

**Description:** Common purslane is a fleshy plant that grows in a low, spreading mat.

**Leaves:** Teardrop-shaped leaves are smooth, fleshy and shiny, and may have red margins.

**Stems:** Pinkish-red and smooth. Stems radiate from the center of the plant.

**Flowers:** Tiny, yellow, with five petals. Occur where leaves join the stem. Flowers open only in the sun. Blooms from summer to fall.

**Seeds:** Tiny and black; can remain dormant in the soil for years.

**Roots:** Has a short taproot.

**Native to:** Europe; has naturalized in much of the United States

**Where it grows:** Gardens, lawns, landscapes and other moist sites. It will also grow in cracks in the pavement.

**Life cycle:** Summer annual (sprouts in spring and summer)

**Reproduction:** Reproduces by seed. One plant can produce 240,000 seeds.



Typical plant growing in a garden.  
(Photo by W. Hanson Mazet)



Seedlings have fleshy leaves.  
(Photo by S. Donaldson)

**Control methods:** Once established, common purslane can be very difficult to control due to the large number of seeds produced, so preventing establishment of this weed is essential. Control should focus on removing seedlings before flowering occurs.

**Mechanical:** Dig, pull or hoe plants. The weed can reroot after cultivation, so it is essential to remove pulled material.

**Cultural:** Mulching with landscape fabric or 3 or more inches of organic mulch to exclude light can be effective. Soil solarization can help reduce the number of seeds in infested garden beds during hot summer months.

**Biological:** A sawfly eats the leaves of the plants, but has not provided good control in our region. Large amounts of purslane can be toxic to livestock and people.

**Chemical:** Spot-treat seedlings or young plants with broadleaf-selective herbicides. Use a surfactant according to label directions. Pre-emergent herbicides may be used to manage sites with many seeds.

## References:

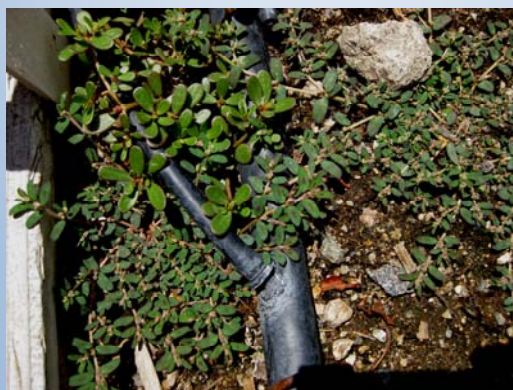
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The leaves are fleshy and succulent, and the stems are pinkish.



Flowers are tiny, yellow and open only in the sun.



It's not uncommon to see purslane growing with other weeds, such as spotted spurge (shown at right and lower left.)

*(Above 3 photos by S. Donaldson)*

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