

Euphorbia exigua L.

Dwarf Spurge

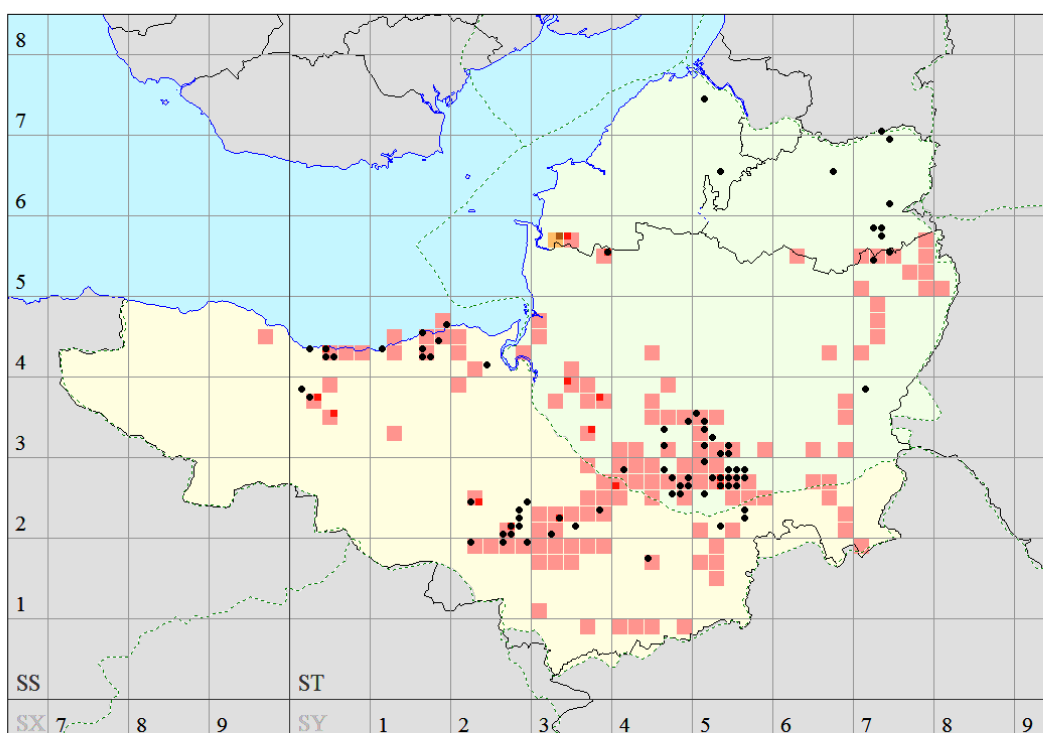
Archaeophyte

GB: Near Threatened

England: Vulnerable

VC5 Not Scarce; VC6 Not Scarce

An annual of base-rich soils and sunny exposed conditions in cultivated fields and, to a lesser extent, other disturbed areas such as gardens, waste ground and bare patches in dry grassland. Murray (1896) described this species as very common in all districts of Somerset, whilst White (1912) regarded it as almost as common as *Euphorbia pepus* (Petty Spurge); it has clearly declined in Somerset. In VC5, since 2000 this species has been found near the coast from Blue Anchor to Hinkley Point, and slightly further inland at Roadwater, Cleeve and Cannington. The main area of distribution in VC5 is to the southeast of Taunton, from Corfe on the northern edge of the Blackdown Hills to Fivehead and Curry Rivel, just south of the Levels, where it is mostly found in arable fields. In 2012 about 200 plants appeared on a newly constructed road bank in Taunton. There are also recent records from arable fields further east, near South Petherton, Limington and Chilton Cantelo. In VC6, the main cluster of post-2000 records is concentrated on the Polden Hills and to their south, from Somerton to Bab Cary and north to Butleigh. There is a small concentration of sites around Wellow, Faulkland and Southstoke in the northeast, with scattered populations in arable fields in the north at Lower Failand Farm, Corston Fields Farm and Manor Farm, Langridge. On the western Mendips, this species was formerly known on Hellenge Hill and Bleadon Hill, but has only recently been seen on Crook Peak. In Winford ten plants were recorded as a street weed in 2013, with a further four plants found in the gutter in 2014. Roe (1981) noted that *Euphorbia exigua* was apparently decreasing in Somerset; it appears to have declined further since 2000, perhaps with a contraction of its range. This species has declined in Britain and Ireland due to agricultural intensification, particularly the use of broad-spectrum herbicides, increased fertilizer applications and development of competitive crop varieties.



Distribution of *Euphorbia exigua* in Somerset, mapped using MapMate. Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999 records; sepia squares are pre-1987 records