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Plant physiology group discussion

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The status of the physiological research in the effort to combat leafy spurge was discussed. Physiological research has been largely overlooked and underfunded. Chemical and biological strategies may fail because we do not understand the fundamental aspects of this plant's growth and development. It was questioned whether the substantial funding for the biological control program in lieu of physiological research is putting the "cart before the horse."

Some funding for physiological research has come from USDA Cooperative Agreements. These type of funds have expired and there is little hope for their continuance. State funding should be sought but there is little hope for expansion in this area. A point was brought up that perhaps we can try harder to make the study of leafy spurge a scientific problem and look for USDA cooperative grant or even NSF monies. These grants however, are extremely difficult to get.

We must continue to focus on the root and crown buds, latex starch, and photo/thermal dormancy research. A new aspect brought up by a member of the group is perhaps the latex of leafy spurge contains symbiotic organisms, as does the latex of milkweed. Can the symbiotics be engineered to damage the plant?

The group adjourned with no resolution to our low funding problems.