

Euphorbiaceae

(*You-four-bee-ah-see-e*)

The Spurge Family

Medium size family of about

200 genera

5000 species (some claim up to 7500)



Description

Euphorbiaceae includes trees, shrubs and climbers. Annuals, perennial and spiny succulents often confused for cacti.

Euphorbiaceae is one of several families that produce latex, commonly toxic and irritant to the skin.

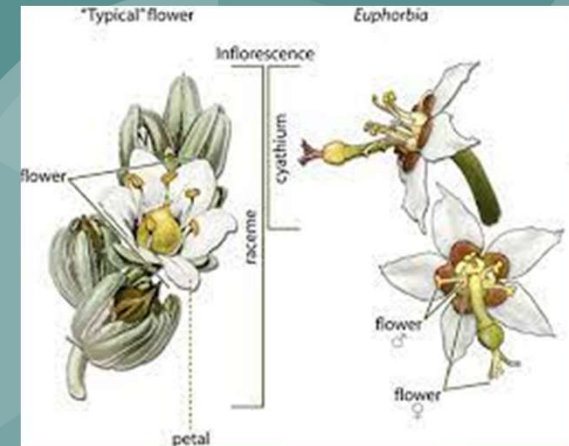
Latex is produced by specialized cells called laticifers, and it is a crucial part of the plant's defense mechanism.



Characteristics:

Euphorbiaceae are dicotyledons

- Leaves are alternate, sometimes opposite or whorled with stipules that are small or replaced by thorns
- In desert plants, leaves are reduced to spines and the stem performs the function of photosynthesis.
- Flowers are small, unisexual, have a superior ovary. Sometimes they have a false flower known as cyanthium.
- Fruits are schizocarps



Pollination of flowers in euphorbiaceae

It is varied and unspecialized

- Some species of *Acalypha* are pollinated by wind and occasional insects.
- Other plants produce oil that attracts bees



Notable Species

Cassava/Tapioca (*Manihot esculenta*)



Castor Oil (*Ricinus communis*)



Rubber Tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*)



Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)



Pests

Euphorbiaceae tends to be problem-free. The latex and spikes makes these plants unappealing to insects.

Mealybugs and spider mites are the most common pests.

Root rot and fungal disease can occur when conditions are too moist.

