



*Chrozophora tinctoria* fruit (left), male flowers (right)



*Chrozophora tinctoria*



*Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*

## EUPHORBIACEAE

Spurge family. A family with about 300 genera and over 5000 species, many producing a milky sap, mainly from tropical and subtropical regions. Many species are poisonous and many economically important. For example, the latex from *Hevea brasiliensis* is used to produce rubber, *Manihot esculenta* (cassava) roots are a food source in the tropics, *Ricinus communis* seeds yield castor oil.

*Chrozophora tinctoria* (turnsole, dyer's litmus plant), native to the Mediterranean region, is an erect, branched, grey-green annual herb to about 50 cm high, covered in star-shaped hairs. Leaves (2–5 cm long) are alternately arranged, oval to diamond-shaped, margins often wavy. Male flowers are greenish-cream in small spike-like clusters with a few female flowers on drooping stalks below. Fruit is a warty capsule (6–8 mm across). Summer and autumn flowering. An uncommon weed of cultivation. [NSW, Vic, SA, WA]

*Croton setiger* (dove weed), sometimes called *Eremocarpus setigerus*, native to California, is an aromatic, mat-forming, velvety-grey annual herb to about 20 cm high and often to 80 cm across. Leaves (to 6 cm long) are alternately arranged, oval to diamond-shaped. Male flowers are in clusters at the tops of branches, with a few female flowers in lower leaf axils. Fruit is an egg-shaped capsule (about 4 mm long) covered with star-shaped hairs. Summer flowering. An uncommon weed in pasture. [NSW, Vic, SA, WA]

*Euphorbia* species (spurges) are characterised by their milky sap, which is poisonous, and unique inflorescences (called cyathia) which resemble single flowers, but are actually a solitary female flower surrounded by clusters of male flowers, all enclosed by a cup-shaped whorl of modified leaves (bracts). Fruit is a capsule that splits into three segments at maturity. There are numerous native species, some reported to have caused poisoning of livestock. The prostrate to ascending species were previously placed in the genus *Chamaesyce*.