

Euphorbiaceae

The Spurge Family

222 genera

6,300 species



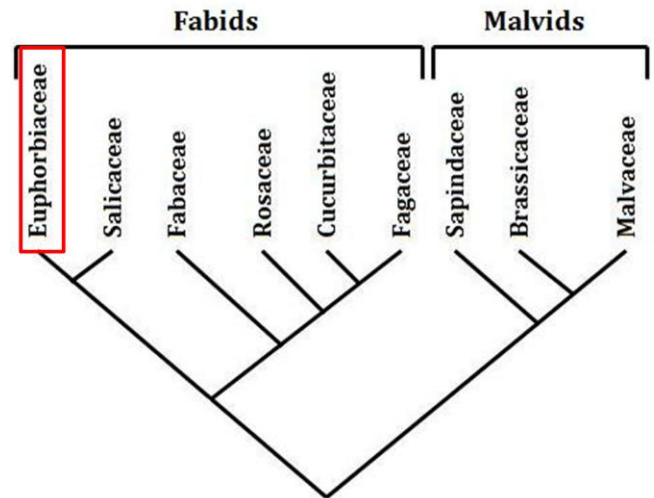
Distribution:

A cosmopolitan family, except Antarctica, but most diverse in tropical regions and often abundant in low to medium altitudes. The plants can be dominant in some ecosystems.

Economic Uses:

- *Hevea brasiliensis* (Rubber tree) is incredibly important economically. Natural rubber played a major role in the industrial revolution and still accounts for about 1/3 of the world's tires.
- *Manihot esculenta* (cassava, manioc, tapioca, yuca) is an important starch crop of neotropical origin.
- Many genera have ornamental value as well, such as *Euphorbia* (poinsettia).

Rosids: Reduced Phylogeny of Required Families



Characteristic features:

- Extraordinarily diverse group of monoecious or dioecious herbs, shrubs, vines, sometimes succulents, or trees.
- Leaves usually alternate.
- Flowers: unisexual; 2-6 sepals; 0-5 petals; usually 3 carpels (tricarpellate ovary), usually 3 styles (sometimes divided), 1 ovule per locule; inflorescences often highly modified.
- Fruit: a schizocarp. Seeds: usually arillate.
- Often with latex/laticifers.

Required genus: *Euphorbia*

- Cyathium: a type of "false flower" (pseudantium) which consists of bracts (formed into a cup-like involucre) subtending 4-5 staminate inflorescences (reduced to a single stamen), and a terminal pistillate flower (reduced to a gynoecium).

References for further inquiry:

- Webster, G.L. Synopsis of the genera and suprageneric taxa of Euphorbiaceae. *Ann. Missouri Bot. Gard.* 81:33-144 (1994).
- Heywood, V.H., Brummitt, R.K., Culham, A., & Seberg, O. Euphorbiaceae. Pp. 144-146. In: *Flowering Plant Families of the World*. New York, Firefly Books (2007).