

Scotch broom identification

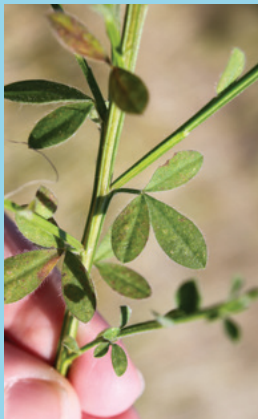
Scotch broom is an evergreen, brushy shrub 3 to 10 feet tall with stiff green branches year round, even when it has no leaves.



Bright yellow, 2-lipped pea-flowers, sometimes marked with orange or red, appear April through June.

Stems are green and ribbed, star-shaped in cross-section when young, becoming smooth and brown with age.

Leaves are small and sparse. The upper are simple and the lower are 3 parted. They are deciduous and pointed at both ends. Leaves may fall early in the year, leaving bare green stems.



Fruits are flattened pea pods with hairs along the edges. They turn brown to black when ripe and twist and pop to release the small seeds.

Scotch broom impacts

Scotch broom aggressively forms dense patches, shading out native plants and reducing forage for livestock, elk, and deer. It is particularly problematic in our native grassland and open forest habitats. Although seldom grazed, it is toxic, especially to horses. Dead branches increase the risk and intensity of fires. Seeds can sprout for years after removal, and cut stumps can regrow. It can change the soil chemistry, making it less suitable to native plants, even years after it is removed. Scotch broom is a major threat to the timber industry, as it rapidly colonizes newly cleared timberland and aggressively competes with tree seedlings.



Scotch broom is a Class B noxious weed in Washington State. Control is mandatory in designated areas, primarily in counties in eastern Washington, and its removal is recommended everywhere else. It is also quarantined, so sale and distribution are illegal. Check with your county noxious weed control board for more information on noxious invasive plants and control requirements.

If you have questions about Scotch broom or other noxious weeds and their identification and control, we can help. Please contact us at:

WA State Noxious Weed Control Board
(360) 725-5764
noxiousweeds@agr.wa.gov
www.nwcb.wa.gov
Or

WA Department of Agriculture
PestProgram@agr.wa.gov
Or
Contact your local County
Noxious Weed Control Board:

Scotch broom

Cytisus scoparius



A noxious weed in Washington

Controlling Scotch broom

Scotch broom can be tough to control, but you can succeed with a long-term management plan and these general steps: (1) Remove plants, (2) replant the area, (3) suppress new seedlings, and (4) monitor for new plants. For best control:

- Start with a manageable amount. It's best to follow through all the steps on one manageable patch at a time. The process can take 5 to 20 years for a large infestation, though only the first few years are the most labor-intensive.
- Prioritize sites on your property. Start with isolated plants and patches and then work your way into the larger patches.
- Don't give up if new Scotch broom plants emerge after removal. The soil beneath Scotch broom is full of seeds that can remain viable for many years. Fortunately, the seedlings and young plants are easy to yank out.
- Stop the seeds. Each shrub can produce over 10,000 seeds a year, and they can remain viable for many years. Try to remove Scotch broom before it sets seeds, or consider releasing biocontrol insects to reduce the production of new seeds.
- Use Integrated Weed Management (IWM). Choose the best control method - or better yet, a combination of methods - based on the site and the infestation.



Image courtesy of Clallam County NWCB

Mechanical: You can pry up small plants (to 1.5 inch in diameter) with their deep taproots, using a levering tool, like an Extractigator or Weed Wrench. This is easiest in spring and fall, when the ground is moist. Keep in mind that this method can disturb the soil, which might stimulate the germination of Scotch broom seeds, so be prepared to control seedlings as they emerge.



Image courtesy of San Juan County NWCB

To avoid uncovering seeds in the soil, cut larger plants to the ground in late summer or early fall, when plants are drought-stressed. Don't cut them in the rainy season, when stumps are more likely to resprout.

For larger infestations, consider mowing the Scotch broom. The resprouts can be managed by grazing goats or treated with less herbicide than the full-sized plants.

Disposal: To avoid spreading seeds, remove plants before they seed. If you cut large quantities - especially if they're seeding, stack shrubs on the spot. You can put small amounts into county compost bins or and dispose of them as yard waste. You can also chip non-seeding plants after they dry.



Image courtesy of King County NWCB

Biological: Goats can help control resprouting plants after mowing and burning, but don't graze other livestock on it since it's toxic to them. There are some companies that now provide goat-grazing services. Biocontrol agents Scotch broom bruchid and Scotch broom seed weevil won't control existing plants, but they can significantly reduce the development of new seeds. Put them to work in large infestation while you work on isolated patches and the edges

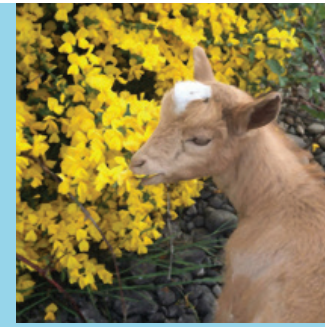


Image courtesy of Mima Prairie Farm



Image courtesy of WSU IWMP

of the infestation. To find out how to get these insects, contact the WSU Extension Integrated Weed Control Project, at <http://invasives.wsu.edu/index.htm>.

Herbicides: Systemic herbicides containing active ingredients such as glyphosate, triclopyr, or aminopyralid can be applied to the leaves and branches, the base of plants, or onto cut stumps. Adding a non-ionic surfactant will improve performance. When possible, apply foliar herbicides when pollinators aren't present, preferably after Scotch broom produces leaves but before it flowers and then sets seed. Always read and follow the label directions carefully for proper dilution rate, application timing, and appropriate sites. For more detailed information on timing and application, contact your county noxious weed board or extension service.

Cultural: Another effective control method for large infestations is to burn the area with a blowtorch or do repeated, controlled burns to destroy plants and seeds. Check for state and local restrictions, burn bans, or permit requirements before burning.

After controlling larger infestations, heavily reseed the area with an annual grass, such as annual rye grass. The fast-growing grass can effectively crowd out many Scotch broom sprouts. Hand-pull the Scotch broom that does sprout, or use a broad-leaf herbicide that will control the Scotch broom but not the grass. When the seed bank has been exhausted, you can replant the area with desirable plants. Scotch broom thrives in full sun but does not do well in the shade. Replanting with trees on suitable sites can prevent regrowth of this invasive plant.

In areas where you want to landscape with native and/or ornamental plants following Scotch broom control, consider mulching to help prevent remaining seeds from sprouting. After you remove the Scotch broom, mulch with cardboard and 3 to 6 inches of wood chips or bark. Replant immediately.

Image courtesy of Clallam County NWCB



Controlling Scotch broom can take a lot of work, but in the long run, it's well worth the effort for the natural resources and the land you get back!