



FACT SHEET

GORSE

Ulex europaeus

- Spiny, perennial evergreen shrub
- 3 feet to 10 feet in height
- Shiny yellow pea-like flowers, very similar to Scotch broom



- Flowers usually appear in late winter or early spring (January to March), but can occur throughout the year
- Extensive root system
- Pea family



(Photo credit: The Nature Conservancy)

ECOLOGY:

- Gorse reproduces mainly by seed but can also spread vegetatively by rhizomes.
- The seeds are fire-tolerant and are viable for 30 years or more.
- It can re-sprout from cut stumps and produce flowers after two years.
- Gorse has the ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen, enabling it to grow in poor, infertile soils. It can grow on roadsides, open areas and on beaches.

DISTRIBUTION:

5 or 6 single gorse plants have been found in Port Townsend, and controlled. There is one large infestation on the Pacific coast. It is important to find new sites and eliminate them as soon as possible, to prevent spread.

WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Gorse is extremely invasive; it can outcompete beneficial native plants and forage plants, reducing biological diversity and agricultural production.
- Gorse can form dense mats with dead material in the center; combined with a high oil content, this creates a fire hazard.

**Gorse is a Class B Noxious Weed.
Control is required in Jefferson County.**

CONTROL

Prevention and early detection are the best means of control!

- **Do not buy or plant** gorse.
- **Avoid** introducing soil or gravel from areas known to have it.
- **Remove** seedlings when young because they can usually be pulled easily (they have not yet developed spines!) and they have not had an opportunity to reproduce.
- **Replant** with a desirable (preferably native) plant species, to discourage re-infestation.
- **Dispose** of weeds properly; bag or burn seed heads or root fragments that may resprout.
- **Monitor** the site for several years; promptly remove new seedlings.

DIGGING OR PULLING can remove small plants but care must be taken to dig out all of the root system.

MOWING is not an effective long-term control method because gorse can re-sprout from cut or mowed stumps. However, mowing before applying herbicide is sometimes a good strategy because it makes the plants more accessible and reduces the amount of herbicide needed. Plants should be allowed to grow a little after mowing to ensure that there is enough surface area to absorb sufficient quantities of herbicide.

HERBICIDES can be effective, but should always be applied with care. Do not apply herbicides over or near water bodies. Read the label to check that you are applying a herbicide in the right place, to the right plant, at the right time, and in the right amount. For perennial weeds, long term control requires stopping seed production **and** attacking the weed's root system. Translocated herbicides, (ones that move throughout a plant's system) are recommended. These are most effective on young, actively growing plants because the herbicide moves around the plant more quickly. Also, herbicide is more easily absorbed by clean, new leaves that have not developed the thickened cuticle (waxy coating) present on mature leaves, which resists herbicide penetration.

- **Cut-stump treatment** (cutting the plant down to a few inches above ground and immediately painting the cut stump surface with undiluted herbicide) is a very effective way to control gorse. Check the label first—make sure that this method is listed.
- **Best** time to spray is after bloom drop and it is important to thoroughly wet the foliage
- **Note:** Most herbicides will **NOT** prevent germination of weed seeds already in the soil, so monitoring and retreatment are necessary

Call the Weed Board for specific herbicide advice.

Call if you see this plant!