



# FACT SHEET

## SCOTCH BROOM

(*Cytisus scoparius*)

- Scotch broom is a deciduous shrub that grows to ten feet tall.
- The dark green woody stems have a waxy covering and are ridged.
- The lower leaves have three leaflets, but the upper leaves are single.
- The pea-like flowers are usually bright yellow, but can be tinged with red or purple. They bloom April to June.
- The black or brown seed pods are hairy at the edges.
- The hard-coated oval seeds are about 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch long.
- The plant has a deep, branched taproot
- Pea family



### LOOK ALIKES:



**Spanish broom** (*Spartium junceum*) (a Class A noxious weed) has smooth stems: The flowers are brighter than Scotch broom, they are less numerous, bloom later in the year, and are fragrant.



**Moonlight** is an ornamental hybrid broom, which is believed to be sterile and consequently unable to produce seed. It has pale yellow flowers.



**Gorse** (*Ulex europaeus*) (a Class B noxious weed) resembles Scotch broom but is usually smaller, and has well-developed spines making the plant very prickly. It blooms in February

### WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Scotch broom is very invasive and displaces native vegetation, reducing wildlife food and habitat.
- It interferes with reforestation by out-competing tree seedlings.
- Mildly toxic.
- Potential fire hazard.
- Its fragrance can trigger allergic reactions

**Scotch broom is a Class B Noxious Weed. Control is required in and within 50 feet of gravel pits and soil mining areas in Jefferson County.**

## DISTRIBUTION:

Scotch broom is widespread throughout Jefferson County—on roadsides, pastures and vacant lots.

## ECOLOGY:

- Because it fixes its own nitrogen, Scotch broom tolerates a wide range of conditions. It prefers sunlight and does not do well in forested areas, but invades rapidly after logging or land clearing.
- A perennial that reproduces by seed; the pea like pods eject the seed up to ten feet. A three year old plant produces up to 18,000 seeds per year, which remain viable in the ground for up to sixty years.
- Although plants can resprout after cutting, individuals rarely live more than 10-15 years.

## CONTROL

### Prevention and early detection are the best means of control.

- **Do not buy or plant** Scotch broom.
- **Avoid** introducing soil or gravel from areas known to have Scotch broom.
- **Revegetate** disturbed areas quickly to prevent infestation by Scotch broom.
- **Clean** any equipment that has been used in areas known to have Scotch broom.
- **Remove** seedlings when young because they can usually be pulled easily and they have not had an opportunity to reproduce.
- **Dispose** of weeds properly; bury (landfill) or burn plants that have already set seed.
- **Monitor** the site for several years; promptly remove new seedlings.

**HANDPULLING** is easiest when seedlings are small and the soil is moist. Soil disturbance, which can create a flush of seedling growth, should be minimized.

The **WEED WRENCH™** is a tool designed to remove tap-rooted plants. It can be used on older broom plants that are too large to hand-pull. Contact the Noxious Weed Control Board at (360) 379-5610 ext 205 for information on borrowing or buying these tools.

**CUTTING** with hand tools or machines is most effective during dry summer months when plants have little moisture to spur regrowth. Plants may resprout unless the stumps are removed or chemically treated. Herbicide should be applied within 5-20 minutes of cutting.

**THERMAL CONTROL**—using a flame thrower to girdle the stem—is as effective as cutting. It also stimulates seed germination which can reduce the seed bank in the soil, but seedlings must be removed as they appear.

## BIOLOGICAL CONTROL:

- Some domestic animals will browse young stems and may reduce growth and seed production.
- The introduced **twig-mining moth (*Leucoptera spartifoliella*)** and the seed weevil (***Apion fuscirostre***) eat only Scotch broom.

**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 Scotch broom. Check the label first—make sure that this method is listed.
- **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.**

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