

San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Program

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If you would like weed identification, site specific control recommendations or additional noxious weed information, contact the San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Program.

Gorse

(*Ulex europaeus*)

(Selected for control in
San Juan County)



All photos: San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Program

About Gorse:

- Native to western and central Europe.
- Reproduces by seeds and root fragments.
- Is extremely flammable.
- A mature stand can produce up to 250 million seeds per acre.
- Has a seed life of 25 - 40 years.
- Flowers in late winter to early spring.

How to recognize gorse:

- Gorse resembles Scotch broom, but with heavy, sharp ½" to 2" spines.
- Forms a dense shrub up to 10' tall.
- Gorse has small trifoliate leaves that mature into spines.
- Showy bright yellow, pea-like flowers.

Why control gorse?



Gorse infestation, near Doe Bay, WA

- Gorse presents an extreme fire hazard.
- Gorse alters soil chemistry.
- Gorse forms dense impenetrable thickets, displacing other plants and animals.
- Gorse increases erosion risk by excluding grasses.

What you can do to control gorse:

Mechanical/cultural:

- Remove isolated mature plants by cutting at least 3" below the ground level or pull with a weed wrench.
- Mow larger stands yearly with a brush hog or weed whacker equipped with a tri-blade.
- Mulching for at least a year with black geo-textile will kill germinating seeds.
- Repeated annual rototilling will kill seedlings and diminish viability of root fragments.
- Establish competitive trees, shrubs or grasses that will shade out germinating seeds.

Chemical:

By law, all herbicides must be used in strict accordance with label instructions.

- Cut larger plants above ground and immediately paint a full strength herbicide on the cut surface.
- Apply Roundup™ (Glyphosate) or Release™ (Triclopyr) or Arsenal™ (Imazapyr) to actively growing plants after blossom drop in the late spring or early summer.

Biological:

- A web-spinning gorse mite (*Tetranychus lintearius*) is established on Orcas, but is unlikely to exert much damage to the gorse population as a whole.

Grazing:

- Sheep, goats and cattle will graze new plants at 2 to 3 inches in height before the leaf spines harden.

- All top growth should be mowed and removed before putting livestock on gorse.
- Chickens may consume and destroy seeds.

What to do with the remains:

- Removal efforts should be undertaken when the plants are not in seed.
- Cut plants may be chipped on site or removed to safe area and piled for burning during the winter. Burn permits will be required.

Follow up:

- Monitoring, at least on a yearly basis, is essential. All seedlings, and stump sprouts must be removed before flowering. November through April is the ideal time for monitoring.

Site restoration:

- After clearing the area of established plants and seedlings, replant with a dense cover crop such as annual ryegrass for the first few seasons to help shade out newly germinating seed.
- A triclopyr herbicide may be used to treat any residual seedlings or sprouting stumps without damage to grasses.



Gorse infestation, near Olga, WA