

# Mason County Noxious Weed Control

Pea Family

**Scotch Broom**

*Cytisus scoparius*

## Identification Tips

- Deciduous shrub with evergreen stems.
- Grows 3 to 12 feet tall.
- Flowers are bright yellow (sometimes with orange, red or cream colored markings).
- Leaves are 1/2 to 1 inch long and oval shaped.
- Leaves generally grow in sets of 3, or singularly at ends of stems.
- Branches are erect, five sided and green, turning yellowish-brown with age.
- Seedpods are 1 to 2 1/2 inches long, black to brown and flat, with hairy margins.



## Biology

- Perennial shrub that blooms from March to June.
- Reproduces by seed, producing over 10,000 seeds per plant.
- Seed pods split when mature, shooting seeds up to 20 feet away from plant.
- Seeds can remain viable in the soil for over 30 years, (some sources estimating as long as 80 years).



Immature Scotch broom seedpods are green (left and top right photo), then turn black-brown with age (bottom right), splitting when mature to eject seeds.

## Impacts

- Outcompetes native grasses, shrubs and trees, reducing habitat and forage for wildlife.
- Infests grasslands and recent clear-cuts, creating economic issues to local agriculture.
- Alters soil chemistry, negatively impacting and sometimes preventing native plant growth.
- Seeds are toxic to wildlife and livestock.
- Creates impenetrable monocultures.
- Increases risk of fire.

## Distribution

- Introduced from Europe as a garden ornamental in the 1860's, Scotch broom can now be found invading much of Western Washington.
- Infests areas such as clear-cuts, roadsides, grasslands and areas with recent disturbance.
- Grows best in full sun but will also establish in shady areas.

**QUESTIONS? Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control at:**

**(360) 427-9670 ext. 592 or [patriciag@co.mason.wa.us](mailto:patriciag@co.mason.wa.us)**

**<https://extension.wsu.edu/mason/natural-resources/noxious-weed-program/>**

## What You Can Do

While there is no legal requirement for controlling Scotch broom in Mason County, the Board recognizes this plant as invasive and is collecting information and providing education on control. The Board encourages and recommends control of existing populations especially in natural lands and forests.

## Control Methods

Survey your yard and surrounding areas for Scotch broom. Choose control methods that are suited to your site, taking into account ecology of site, funding and available labor. Long term control requires integrating methods. After removal, sites must be monitored for several years for new plants. This is necessary for long term control due to the long seed viability (up to 80 years).

## Prevention

**It is illegal to transport or buy Scotch broom.** Check recently purchased soil and gravel for seedlings and pull when found. Fall and spring are generally the best times to monitor for seedlings. Clean clothes, animals and equipment that have traveled through infested areas. Cleared areas should be reseeded to add competition.

## Manual Control

Pulling is an effective, but labor intensive method of control. Deep roots should be removed to avoid resprouting. Small plants (< 3 feet) can be hand pulled, larger plants (> 3 feet) typically require tools, such as a weed wrench. **The Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board assists landowners by loaning weed wrenches.**



Instead of yellow flowers some Scotch broom will have red, orange or light yellow markings. Don't be fooled by these unique flowers!

## Be on the lookout for other Noxious Weeds in the Pea Family



French broom, *Genista monspessulana*: (Class A Weed) flowers 0.35 - 0.5 inches and in clusters of 4-10 at end of stem. **Young stems have 8-10 ridges, then turn brown and lose ridges.**



Spanish broom, *Spartium junceum*: (Class A Weed) Stems are **round and lack leaves for most of year**. Flowers are 1 inch long and clustered at stem end.



Gorse, *Ulex europaeus*: (Class B-Designate Weed) Grows > 10 feet tall. Flowers are yellow, 1/2 - 3/4 inch long. **Has trifoliate leaves that turn into spines with age.**

## Mechanical

Cutting or mowing can work to prevent plants from flowering or going to seed. Repeated mowing works by starving the root. Plants often resprout as short, dense plants. Cutting at the base with loppers can work as control method, however plants often regrow. Cutting is most effective on mature plants, during dry season or right after plants have flowered.

## Chemical

**Choose a formulation that is appropriate for your site. Follow the label exactly as written and use only at rate prescribed. Do not apply herbicide over or near water bodies.**

A product containing triclopyr or glyphosate can be used for Scotch broom control. Triclopyr is the more effective product and is selective, only impacting other broadleaf species. Non-selective herbicides containing glyphosate will damage all plant species, including grasses.

Foliar herbicide treatments are most effective after leaf development, but before winter dormancy. Cut stump method using one of these ingredients can also be used. Do not spray scotch broom when flowering to avoid impact on pollinators.

**Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board with questions about herbicide application.**

