

# NOXIOUS WEED ALERT

## 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.



### Look-a-likes:

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



### Distribution:

Scotch broom is widespread throughout Clallam County.



“**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*) 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 outcompeting tree seedlings.
- Mildly toxic.
- Potential fire hazard.
- Its fragrance can trigger allergic reactions in some people.

**Scotch broom is a Class B weed. Within Clallam County control is required in and around gravel pits and soil mining areas.**

## 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.
- **Replant** with a desirable (preferably native) plant species, to discourage reinfestation.
- **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 handpull. Contact the Weed Control Board or the Extension Office ((360) 417-2279) 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. Chemical 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. The seed weevil has been released in western Clallam County, but it is too early to tell how successful it has been as a control measure.

**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 an 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) such as Garlon™ (triclopyr) or Roundup™ (glyphosate) are recommended.

- Garlon™ will not harm established grasses, but Roundup™ is a non-selective herbicide which must be carefully applied to avoid drift to non-target plants.

Prepared by the **Clallam County Noxious Weed Control Board**; revised 11/2000

For more information call: **(360)-417-2442**  
or see [www.clallam.net/weed](http://www.clallam.net/weed)