

"B" Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant,
but may have limited distribution in some counties

Scotch broom
Cytisus scoparius

Other common names: English broom, scot's broom

USDA symbol: CYSC4
ODA rating: B



Introduction: Scotch broom is one of Western Oregon's most widespread and costliest weeds. Scotch broom was widely planted in Western Oregon for dune stabilization and as an ornamental along highway corridors. It is now the most extensive forest weed species and a significant source of pollen affecting allergy sufferers.

Distribution in Oregon: Scotch broom is endemic throughout Western Oregon with the occasional isolated population appearing in the pine forests of eastern Oregon.

Description: Scotch broom is an attractive evergreen shrub with many slender, erect, dark-green branches. It can grow up to 8 feet tall. In May it is adorned with a profusion of yellow flowers maturing to flattened pods with up to a dozen seeds each. Mature dried pods will crackle and pop in mid summer ejecting the seeds a short distance. It can be confused with the less common Spanish broom, Spanish broom has fewer round stems, very few leaves, and larger yellow flowers.

Impacts: Scotch broom is a pioneer species known to displace native plants and smother tree transplants increasing tree death or slowing growth in the early years. It readily invades disturbed sites, natural areas, dunes, and forestlands. Broom control costs on right-of-ways, public facilities, parkland and private property are in the millions of dollars each year due to its rapid growth and persistent nature. Scotch broom is a prolific seed producer of long-lived (10 years plus) seeds. Broom stands establish persistent soil-seed banks requiring long-term commitment to exhaust. The costs attributed to Scotch broom come from labor and chemical inputs needed to control infestations (\$47 million annually) in timberlands and from lost productivity. Pollen production during bloom time also can be quite an allergen source for allergy sufferers.

Biological controls: Three biological control agents, a beetle, a seed weevil and a twig miner are approved for release and have been established in Oregon: *Bruchidius villosus*, *Exapion fuscirostre*, *Leucoptera spartifoliella*. They can significantly reduce seed production and can shorten a broom's life span.

