

“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

USDA symbol: CYSC4
ODA rating: B



Distribution in Oregon: The first documentation of Scotch broom in Oregon was in 1892 in Benton County.

Introduction: Scotch broom has been widely planted in Western Oregon for dune stabilization and as an ornamental along highway corridors. It was also a popular ornamental plant. It is now the biggest nuisance forest species in Oregon.

Description: Scotch broom is a perennial leguminous shrub growing up to 8 feet tall. It is an attractive evergreen shrub with many slender, erect, dark-green branches adorned with small, inconspicuous deciduous leaves. It supports a profusion of yellow, pea-shaped flowers making it a very showy plant. Occasionally 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 increase the costs of timber reforestation. 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. Thick stands establish persistent seed banks requiring long-term commitment to exhaust. The largest costs attributed to Scotch broom come from labor and chemical inputs needed to establish trees in broom-infested timberlands. It is estimated that Scotch broom costs Oregon \$47 million dollars annually in lost timber production and control costs. 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.

