

## Scotch Broom – a Fire Hazard

Brooms are an invasive type of non-native plant that greatly increases fire danger. Scotch broom, Spanish broom and French broom are shrub-like plants that grow up to 9 feet tall, with green stems and yellow pea-like flowers. The brooms were originally introduced as landscape ornamentals. Scotch and Spanish broom were also extensively planted along highways in some areas to prevent soil erosion in the early half of the 1900's. Since then brooms have escaped cultivation and aggressively invaded many natural areas.

Brooms grow rapidly and form dense stands that are inaccessible and unpalatable to wildlife. The dense stems make regeneration of most native species difficult if not impossible and they also create a dangerous fire condition. As the plant grows, the inner stems die back, providing a highly flammable fuel. Broom seeds can spread down streams and roads and severely degrade riparian zones and forest communities.

**Control concepts:** It should be noted that any soil disturbance can cause new seedlings to sprout or deeply buried seeds in the soil to germinate. Seeding grasses or other plants to compete with the broom will decrease successful germination. But most brooms are vigorous at resprouting and cannot be successfully managed using these methods. Sixty five percent of broom seeds germinate within the first 2 years, and they have been reported to remain viable for up to 25 years. This means successful eradication will take an extensive effort the first two years, with repeated monitoring of the site for germination over an extended period.

**Mechanical control:** Eradication can also be accomplished by pulling the plants out of the ground in the spring if they are small by hand or with a weed wrench for bigger brooms. The wrench locks on to the base of the stem and leverage is used to remove the entire plant preventing any resprouting. Mowing, grazing with goats or cutting broom will eventually exhaust the root energy reserves and kill the plant. The key is to treat it each year to the extent that the broom is prevented from seed production

**Herbicide control:** Brooms can be controlled and eradicated using herbicide or by physically uprooting the plants. Glyphosate (sold as Roundup® and under other trade names) can control brooms. A 1.5 or 2% solution of glyphosate sprayed on the plant until it is thoroughly wet at the time of blooming, or a 50% solution painted directly on freshly cut stems of the broom can eradicate the plant. As with all herbicides, please refer to the product labeling for use and directions. If your water is high in calcium or magnesium use the label instructions for acidification of water before adding the glyphosate.

For more information go to these web sites:

<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8049.pdf>

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/phpps/ipc/weedinfo/brooms.htm>



Flower



Infestation



Full plant



Pods