

---

May 21, 2015

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Alison Halpern, Executive Secretary; 360-902-2053, [ahalpern@agr.wa.gov](mailto:ahalpern@agr.wa.gov)

Written by: Cindy Riskin, special to the WSNWCB, Master of Environmental Horticulture; 206-817-0746, [cindyri@g.com](mailto:cindyri@g.com)

**Dig Scotch Broom Now to Improve Forage and Wildlife Habitat**

***Noxious invasive shrub poisons some livestock, increases fire hazard***

**Olympia—May 21, 2015**—Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) can set 10,000 seeds a year, so if you're planning to dig up shrubs, get them now while soil is still moist, making it easier to remove the whole taproot and prevent regrowth. If you're going to cut a Scotch broom infestation, however, hold off until late summer or early fall, when plants are stressed from drought. Extra care is needed when trying to remove Scotch broom, which can regrow from stumps cut in the rainy season and resprout from seeds as long as 80 years after they're deposited. Even after you remove this invasive shrub, don't be surprised if it takes a few years for new plants to grow: Scotch broom changes soil properties, such as the amount of nitrogen and acidity, making it hostile to other plants.

You've probably seen Scotch broom along Washington's highways or growing in fields and recently cleared areas. A brushy green shrub that drips bright yellow pea-flowers (sometimes marked with red) in spring, Scotch broom aggressively forms dense patches, shading out native plants and destroying forage for livestock forage and browse for and elk and deer. Although it is seldom grazed, it can be toxic, especially to horses, and can cause birth defects if eaten over time. Its dead branches accumulate over time, increasing the risk and intensity of fires.

"Seeing the roadsides turn yellow this time of year from the blooming Scotch broom can make people see red", says Alison Halpern, Executive Secretary of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board. "There simply aren't enough resources to control it all in Western Washington. However, we greatly appreciate all the unsung heroes who work tirelessly to control it, such as weed warrior volunteers, county weed boards, state and county agencies, and private landowners determined not to let this noxious weed get the best of their land."

## Control

A Class B noxious invasive weed in Washington State, Scotch broom's removal is required in most eastern Washington counties and recommended in western counties, where it is already widespread. Try removing smaller infestations using mechanical methods:

- In spring, uproot plants with stems up to 1.5 inch diameter using a shovel or levering tool, such as a Weed Wrench or Extractigator. Take care to dig up the deep taproots, which can send up new plants.
- To avoid exposing thousands of buried seeds awaiting their season in the sun, cut shrubs with larger stems in fall when plants are drought stressed.

For large infestations, you can use the following methods in combination or with mechanical removal:

- Mow repeatedly when growing to weaken (not kill) plants.
- Then apply herbicides to leaves, the bases of plants, or cut stumps. Use foliar herbicides when bees aren't present. For detailed information, contact your county noxious weed board, through [http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/nwcb\\_county.htm](http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/nwcb_county.htm), or go to <http://pnwhandbooks.org/weed/other-items/control-problem-weeds/broom-scotch-cytisus-scoparius>.
- Have goats eat resprouting plants. Reportedly, llamas will also work. **Caution:** Scotch broom is poisonous to other livestock.
- The Scotch broom bruchid and Scotch broom seed weevil can significantly reduce seeds. For more information on these insects, contact WSU Extension Integrated Weed Control Project, at <http://invasives.wsu.edu/index.htm>.

For all infestations, mulch or cover the ground after removing plants; do repeated, controlled burns; or use a propane torch to kill exposed seeds. Don't give up: You'll probably need to repeat your efforts every 2 to 3 years to keep new plants from making seeds.

## Disposal

Whatever you do, avoid spreading seeds. If you can, remove plants before they go to seed. If you cut large numbers of shrubs while they're seeding, stack them on the spot. You can put small amounts into county compost bins or remove them in plastic bags.

## Photographs

Photos available at <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/detail.asp?weed=44#photos>.

###