

Control of Scotch Broom

Scotch broom is difficult to control once it has established on a site due to the massive production of seeds that are spread in the area. For mature and dense infestations of Scotch broom, aggressive control methods are required.

Cutting mature Scotch broom with follow-up herbicide application:

- Mature plants need to be cut off at ground level using loppers, pruning saws or chainsaws and then the base ideally painted with glyphosate. Be sure to follow all safety precautions when applying glyphosate.

Disposal: for updates on disposal options, contact the SCRD
604-885-6800

Information Sources and Further Reading:

<https://bcinvasives.ca/resources/tips/scotch-broom>

Broom Busters, <http://www.broombusters.org>.

Pamphlet sponsored by the Halfmoon Bay Citizens' Association, whose mission is "to promote the maintenance of a quality physical environment for the community of HMB."

Note: On the Sunshine Coast, volunteer groups such as the Halfmoon Bay Broom Busters organize work groups to mechanically remove Scotch Broom. This group can be contacted at: 604 741-9846.

A Homeowner's Guide Scotch Broom



Habitat: This escaped garden ornamental invades exposed, well-drained mineral soil, and is shade-intolerant.

Reproduction: Scotch Broom is a perennial species that reproduces by seed and lateral bud growth. Mature plants can produce up to 3500 pods, each containing 5–12 seeds.

Dispersal: As seedpods dry they split and spiral, expelling the contained seeds up to 5 meters. The plant can also spread to new disturbed areas through seed transport by vehicles and machinery. Due to its affinity for light-dominated, disturbed areas, any disturbance activity, such as road construction near infested areas, can enhance spread.

Negative Impacts of Scotch Broom:

- **Fire Hazard:** Mature Scotch Broom plants contain a large percentage of dead wood which, when combined with internal oils and resins within the plant, can create a significant hazard of wild fire during long dry spells. On long corridors (e.g. Forest Service Roads, Hydro Transmission lines, highways, pipelines etc.), a fire starting on the corridor may “run” at great speed along the corridor setting fire to the forest that bounds the corridor.
- **Allelopathic:** The roots of the plant exude chemicals that negatively impact the growth of other plants by reducing growth and vigor. In jurisdictions such as Washington and Oregon states, economic analysis has demonstrated the loss of millions of dollars in commercial tree production due to the negative impact of Scotch Broom on per acre commercial productivity.
- **Dense thickets:** Scotch Broom plants can create virtually impenetrable thickets which impede or prevent the movement of animals and people through the thicket. These dense thickets overshadow native plants and, when combined with the chemicals released from the roots, create a monoculture of Scotch Broom on the site.
- **Public health:** Pollen from Scotch Broom is a notorious problem for people with allergies to plant pollen during springtime. The seed pods are toxic – especially to young children and some animals.



Mechanical control:

- Young plants with stems less than 1.5 cm in diameter may be pulled by hand, including all roots. Hand pulling may encourage broom growth due to the high level of soil disturbance. If pulling will result in soil disturbance, plants can be cut as close to the ground as possible.
- Mature plants need to be cut off at ground level using loppers, pruning saws or chainsaws and the trunk needs to be split with an axe, thereby negating the need to apply glyphosate to the stump.
- Remove broom before it flowers (late winter, early spring) to prevent seed maturation.