



Scotch Broom

Cytisus scoparius (L.) Link

Common Name: Scotch broom, English broom, broomtops, common broom, European broom, Irish broom

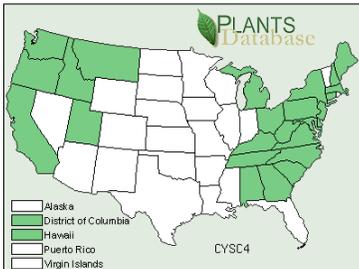
Native Origin: British Isles, central and southern Europe



UGA0023001

Description: An upright perennial shrub in the pea family (*Fabaceae*) growing 3 - 12 feet in height. Slender, sharply angled branches are greenish brown and smooth but becoming shallowly fissured with lighter strips. Leaves are compound, alternate and absent in late summer to early spring. The three leaflets are 0.5 – 1 inch long, egg-shaped, dark green above and pale and hairy below. Bright yellow flowers bloom from March to June. The pea-like flowers occur individually in axils and are approximately 1 inch long. Flat pods contain 5-8 bean-like seeds that can remain viable for sixty years. The flat pods are dark brown to black with fuzzy edges, 1 to 1 1/2 inches long and burst open when ripe in late summer to scatter seeds for several yards. Shrubs can produce up to 60 seed pods per bush by their second year. The aggressive root system consists of a taproot that may exceed 2 feet in length, with large shallow lateral roots. Scotch broom reproduces by seed or vegetatively from the resprouting of the root crown.

Habitat: It grows in open forests, roadsides, grasslands, pastures, cultivated fields, dry scrubland, wasteland, dry meadows, dry riverbeds and other waterways. It can tolerate a wide range of soil conditions but thrives best in full sun on dry, sandy soils with a pH of 4.5 – 7.5.



Distribution: This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is considered invasive in CA, DE, GA, MA, NC, NY, OR, SC, TN, VA, and WA.

Ecological Impacts: This aggressive, rapid spreading plant can grow 3 feet in the first year. It can form dense impenetrable stands that degrade rangeland, prevent forest regeneration, and create fire hazards. It invades rapidly following logging, land clearing, and burning. It can form pure dense stands for miles along highway and country roads to crowd out native species and destroy wildlife habitat.

Toxicity: Mild poisoning can occur from this shrub. Large amounts are required to cause symptoms in animals such as horses. Alkaloids have been identified as being the toxic principle. Cytisin, sparteine and isosparteine are found in the twigs, leaves and seeds in small amounts.

Control and Management:

- **Manual-** Hand pull, hand hoe or dig out small plants; brush cutters, power saws, axes, machetes, loppers, clippers, and mowers can be used to cut shrubs; where appropriate, burning is effective to deplete the seedbank but must be repeated in two to four years.
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate, 2,4-Dor triclophyr when used just after plants have flowered. Follow label and state requirements.
- **Biological Competition-** Sow native plant species that have the potential to out-compete this shrub
- **Biocontrol-** Three biocontrol agents are currently used: the Scotch broom seed weevil (*Apion fuscirostre*), twig miner (*Leucoptera spartifoliella*), and the Gorse or broom tip moth (*Agonopterix nervosa*).

References: <http://plants.usda.gov>, www.nps.gov/plants/alien/map/eucy1.htm, www.forestimages.org, www.oneplan.org/Crop/noxWeeds/nxWeed26.shtml, Czarapeta, Elizabeth J., *Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest: An Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control*, 2005. p. 124, www.fw.vt.edu/dendro/dendrology/syllabus/factsheet.cfm?ID=413, <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/documnts/cytisco.html>, www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/scotchbroom.shtml, <http://www.caf.wvu.edu/~forage/library/poisonous/page13.htm#scotch>