

# Scotch Broom



stems



flower



leaves

# Scotch Broom

**Genus:** Cytisus

**Species:** scoparius

**Priority Listing:** 1B

**Perennial**

Scotch broom is native to Europe, and was introduced into North America as an **ornamental** in the 1800's. Areas in full sun with sandy soils that have been disturbed such as open forests, roadsides, grasslands, pastures, cultivated fields, wastelands, dry meadows and riverbeds are typical habitats of this plant.

Scotch broom can grow up to 13' tall and has a very aggressive root system consisting of a **taproot** and numerous **lateral** roots. The leaves of this plant are compound with three leaflets and grow at the stem bases of the lower branches; leaves are not noticeable in the summertime. Upper stem leaflets are oval shaped, 1" long, are dark green on the leaf top and lighter on the bottom because the underside of the leaf is hairy.

The flowers of this plant are bright yellow, look like sweet pea flowers, and bloom from March to June. Flowers are 1" long; occur individually in angles between the leaves and the stem.

Scotch broom produces shiny greenish-brown seeds in dark brown-black, flat pods that are covered with short white hairs. Each pod produces

tiny seeds that can remain viable for up to 60 years!

Scotch broom seeds are collected by ants, which aids in spreading them around and helps cause new infestations.

Plants reproduce through both seeds and sprouts at the root crown. Scotch broom is **toxic** to horses and sheep; if eaten in too large of a quantity it can be fatal.



Photo courtesy of Eric Coombs, Oregon Department of Agriculture; Bugwood.org

**Herbicide:** a chemical substance used to kill or destroy plants, likely to be used on weeds

**Lateral:** roots forming on the side of a taproot

**Ornamental:** a plant that serves a purpose for ornament, or is grown for show

**Perennial:** a plant whose life spans several years

**Taproot:** a main single root of a plant, generally growing straight down

**Toxic:** poisonous quality based upon poisonous substances at the cellular level of organisms