

Spanish Broom

Spartium junceum

Pea Family

Class A Noxious Weed: Eradication Required

Identification Tips

- Evergreen shrub
- Reaches heights of 6 to 10 feet
- Erect, rounded, bright green rush-like stems
- Stems leafless most of the year; leaves that do appear in early spring are simple and one-parted
- Small, fragrant yellow flowers grow in clusters at the end of the stem

Biology

- Flowers from July to October
- Reproduces by seed; one plant can produce up to 10,000 seeds in one season
- Seeds fall near the plant and are moved by erosion, rain, and human activity
- Seeds remain viable in the soil for at least 5 years

Impacts

- Displaces native and beneficial plants
- Renders rangeland and grasslands worthless
- Poisonous to humans, horses and livestock
- Dense stands impede the movement of wildlife
- Considered a potential fire hazard

Distribution

- Limited distribution in King County; most sites deliberately planted or the result of seeds spreading from gardens
- Establishes in areas with full sun and limited water; can also grow in poor, rocky soil
- Often found in the same habitat as Scotch broom, a close relative; grows along roadsides, trails, vacant lots and disturbed sites

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control
Program Line: 206-296-0290
www.kingcounty.gov/weeds



Due to its limited distribution in King County, Spanish broom is a Class A weed; removal is required by law.



Mature Spanish broom becomes very dense and is considered a fire hazard during the dry season.

What You Can Do

The King County Noxious Weed Control Program is actively trying to eradicate Spanish broom from all areas in the county. Do your part by checking for this noxious weed on your property.

Control Methods

If you find Spanish broom on your property, choose one or a combination of the control methods listed below.

Manual: For small sites with few plants, pull or dig up plants and remove as much root as possible so the plant will not re-sprout. This method can be highly labor-intensive and to be fully effective, all mature plants need to be removed so no new seeds are produced. Pulling of medium to large plants is much easier with specially designed steel weed wrenches. Several wrenches are available to borrow from the King County Noxious Weed Control Program (call for more information).

Mechanical: Repeated cutting can keep plants from spreading but will not usually kill them. For mature plants, clear thick stands or multibranching plants with manually operated tools: chainsaws, brush cutters, axes, machetes or loppers. Cut plants near ground level; this is much more effective when done in the dry season (July-September) but take care to avoid spreading mature seed pods to un-infested areas.

Chemical: **Follow labels exactly as written and only use products appropriate and legal for the site. Herbicides should only be applied at the rates specified on the label.**

Foliar herbicides are most effective if applied to actively growing plants. Glyphosate (the active ingredient in Roundup) is absorbed through leaves and flowers, not woody stems. However, glyphosate is “non-selective” and will injure any foliage that it comes in contact with, so do not drip on desirable plants. Selective broadleaf herbicides with the active ingredient of triclopyr, 2,4-D and metsulfuron work well for lawn or pasture areas as they won’t harm grasses. When using this type of herbicide or one with glyphosate, do not cut down the treated brooms until they have died completely. This can take two weeks or more. Another effective method is to cut the stem and apply concentrated herbicide directly to the freshly cut stem. Chemical



For manual control, specially designed weed wrenches work well to remove Spanish broom as well as Scotch broom and gorse.



Scotch broom

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Scotch Broom

Spanish and Scotch brooms are close relatives and often are found growing together. Scotch broom, however, is much more widespread in King County and thus not required for control. Identifying one broom from the other can be difficult, but the main difference is Scotch broom stems are ridged while Spanish broom stems are round and smooth. Another distinction: Spanish broom flowers are very fragrant; the flowers on Scotch brooms are not.



King County

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