

Broom species of concern:

There are three species of brooms invading the Tahoe Basin. Scotch broom is the most common, but French and Spanish are also troublesome.

Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*)

- Upright, evergreen shrub that can grow to 12 feet tall, commonly 3 to 6 feet tall.
- Stems are numerous, erect, woody, green to brownish-green, and prominently ridged; usually 5-angled.
- Leaves are single or in clusters on short stalks; consist of three leaflets. Stems often appear nearly leafless.
- Flowers are bright yellow and pea-like, are about ½ to 1 inch long, and occur singly or paired in leaf axils.
- Flowers mostly from April to June, but can flower sporadically throughout the year.
- Seeds form in 1- to 2½-inch long pods that ripen in summer and burst open, ejecting seeds.



Photo by S. Donaldson, UNCE

Scotch broom produces pea-like yellow flowers in spring.

French broom (*Genista monspessulana*)

- Leaves are obvious and more trifoliate than Scotch, and are evergreen.
- Stems are ridged, but not sharply angled.
- Four to 10 flowers occur in headlike clusters at ends of short branchlets.

Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*)

- Often is leafless or nearly leafless, especially later in the season.
- Stems are round.
- Leaves are deciduous.
- Flowers have a strong fragrance.

Instead of broom, consider planting:



Photo by C. Malone, UNR

Harrison's Yellow Rose (*Rosa harisonii*)



Photo by S. Donaldson, UNCE

Cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*)



For more information, contact:

NEVADA

In Douglas County:

Weed District

(775) 782-9835

In Washoe County:

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

(775) 784-4848

CALIFORNIA

In El Dorado County:

Agriculture Department

(530) 621-5520

In Nevada County:

Agriculture Department

(530) 273-2648

In Placer County:

Agriculture Department

(530) 889-7372



BROOM

out of
your yard!



Broom – It's not just a pretty plant!

Do you have Scotch broom in your yard? Don't be fooled by this seemingly innocent ornamental plant! It can escape from your garden beds and invade adjacent areas, expanding rapidly and forcing out native plants. It also grows in dense patches, which creates a fire hazard.

Scotch broom is native to the British Isles and central and southern Europe. It is believed that the stems of the plant were used to make brooms. Scotch broom was introduced to the United States for use as an ornamental and later to control erosion and stabilize coastal dunes. It soon escaped cultivation, however, and by 1985, had infested an estimated 600,000 acres in California alone.

Today, it has become firmly established as an invasive weed, or a nonnative plant that is prolific, highly competitive, and difficult to control. Invasive weeds displace native plants; decrease wildlife habitat; alter normal ecological processes; reduce recreational values and uses; and cost us millions of dollars each year in treatment costs, decreased land productivity, and decreased land value.

* *The coarse root structure of broom plants fails to stabilize soil, resulting in increased erosion and stream sedimentation, which can damage Lake Tahoe's famed, clear water.*

This hillside has been invaded by Scotch broom. Don't let this happen to Lake Tahoe!

Photo by W. Frost, UCCE



Photo by S. Donaldson, UNCE

Prior to bloom, Scotch broom plants have a stemmy appearance with inconspicuous leaves.

What's the problem with Scotch broom?

- It grows rapidly and forms dense stands that are inaccessible to wildlife and do not provide a food source.
- It displaces native vegetation in meadows, riparian areas, forests, and floodplains.
- Its dense growth creates a fire hazard. The dead stems are highly flammable.
- A single mature Scotch broom plant can produce about 15,000 seeds per year, about 40% of which will sprout in the first year!
- Its aggressive root system includes a stout taproot and many extensive, shallow lateral branches, making it very difficult to control.

Where does it grow?

- In pastures, fields, grasslands, forests, and gardens.
- Along roadsides where soils are frequently disturbed.
- In a variety of soil textures and wide pH ranges, although it thrives in dry, sandy soils in full sunlight.



How to control Scotch broom:

A variety of tactics may be used to control broom. Young plants can be removed by hand-pulling, which is most effective in moist soils before plants produce seed. Larger plants can be removed by digging out the root, or using a pulaski or a specialized tool called a weed wrench. To borrow a weed wrench, contact Tahoe Resource Conservation District, (530) 543-1501 ext. 5. Since both pulling and digging will disturb the soil and may bring broom seeds to the surface where they can germinate, it is important to monitor the site regularly and remove sprouts. Revegetate the site with vigorous, competitive plants.

Cutting the plant's stems near the base during the driest period of the growing season (late summer to fall) is also effective. To maximize effectiveness, lop within 3 inches of the soil surface. Be sure to monitor often for new sprouts, and remove them promptly.

Mowing is more effective when broom is under drought stress. Mow as close as possible to the ground. Several cuttings may be required.

If mechanical methods cannot be used, there are many herbicides that are effective on broom. Contact your local county agriculture department or pest control advisor for assistance. Herbicides that are readily available to homeowners include glyphosate and triclopyr. Spray the plant thoroughly just as the flowers are blooming. Be careful to avoid contact with desirable plants that may be harmed by the herbicide. Always follow all label instructions.

Photo by W. West, UCCE



A weed wrench aids in uprooting plants.