

# LAKE COUNTY WEED MANAGEMENT AREA WEED CONTROL PROGRAM ALERT

## Scotch Broom

*Cytisus scoparius*

Pea Family

### Non-native Invasive Weed\*

#### Identification Tips

- Evergreen shrub
- Reaches heights of 6 to 10 feet
- Branches are erect and angles with prominent ridges
- Small yellow flowers along entire stem
- Small, short-lived leaves can be simple, but are Generally three-parted

#### Biology

- Flowers from March to June
- Reproduces primarily by seed; when mature, the seedpods split and eject seed up to 20 feet away
- Over 10,000 seeds can be produced per plant
- Seeds can remain viable in the soil for 5 to 60 years

#### Impacts

- Displace native and beneficial plants and prevents reforestation
- Renders rangeland and grasslands worthless
- Seeds toxic to humans and livestock
- Dense stands can impede movement of wildlife
- Considered a potential fire hazard
- **Uses water at a higher rate than native vegetation**

#### Distribution

- Found throughout Lake County including pastures, vacant lands, harvested timberland, and along roadsides and right-of-way
- Thrives in full sun, but will also establish in shady areas



Scotch broom was brought to the United States from the British Isle and central Europe as an ornamental and for erosion control.



Scotch broom spreads rapidly, growing so dense that it is often impenetrable.

\*Control is not required for Lake County by the State of California, but it is recommended wherever feasible.

Questions? \_\_\_\_\_  
Lake County Agriculture Dept.  
707-263-0217

## What You Can Do

There are no legal requirements to control Scotch broom in Lake County, but removal is recommended as part of forestry, pasture, and natural area management. You can prevent Scotch broom from spreading by washing vehicles, boots, and animals that may have been in infested areas and removing it from your property wherever possible.

## Control Methods

For best results, control methods should be adaptive and employed throughout several growing seasons.

**MANUAL:** For small sites with fewer 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 a specially designed steel weed wrench. While the original Weed Wrench has been discontinued, alternatives are available online. Controlled burning can also be effective for removing dense broom infestations. Check local regulations for Special permits, burn bans, or other restrictions.



Specially designed weed wrenches work well for Scotch broom removal.

**MECHANICAL:** Cutting down mature shrubs is fairly effective, but mowing young green plants is not and will result in a dense carpet of short broom plants. For mature plants, clear thick stands or multi-branched plants with manually operated tools: chainsaws, brush cutters, axes, machetes, or loppers. Cut plants near ground level where the stem is more yellow than green; much more effective when done in the dry season (August - September), but take care to avoid spreading seed pods to un-infested areas. Cut large mature plants at chest height or below and cut off side branches. The key to success is to keep seeds from forming after initial clearing.

**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 herbicide is most

### Spanish and French Broom Removal

While these two broom plants look similar, they can be identified by different stem and leaf configurations. Both are non-native and highly invasive in the same types of habitat as Scotch broom. They are found in both urban and rural areas where it has escaped ornamental plantings. They should receive the same handling as Scotch broom, taking care not to spread seeds into uninfested areas.

effective after full leaf development and before fall senescence. Basal cut stump treatment methods are also effective. Products containing glyphosate are most effective if applied to actively growing plants. Glyphosate is absorbed by the growing leaves (not woody stems). However, glyphosate is “non-selective” and will injure any foliage that is comes in contact with. So make sure not to 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. After applying herbicides, do not cut down the treated broom until they have died completely. This can take two weeks or more. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial, and government agency users. For questions about herbicide use, contact the Lake County Agriculture Department.