

Cape Broom (*Genista monspessulana*)

November 2015



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Cape Broom, sometimes known as Montpellier Broom, is a perennial shrub that invades the understorey of grassy woodland vegetation. It is a significant weed in the higher rainfall areas of the Mount Lofty Ranges.

Cape Broom is a declared weed under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (NRM Act).

Description

Cape Broom is an erect, evergreen, woody shrub that grows up to 3 m high. Plants live for 10 to 15 years and have a deep, branching tap root.

The pea-like flowers are bright yellow and appear from August to November. Five to eight seeds are produced in each flat silky pod. As the seed pods dry they burst and eject seed over several meters.

Each plant produces thousands of seeds. A large proportion of the seed is initially dormant and can survive in the soil for over 5 years. Consequently plants quickly establish a large store of seed in the soil which supports ongoing germination for many years.

Seeds germinate in autumn and spring.

Impacts

Cape Broom invades native grassland, woodland vegetation and watercourses where it forms dense thickets. Cape Broom displaces native groundcover species and shrubs, reducing biodiversity and habitat value. The plants increase nitrogen levels in the soil which can encourage other pest plants to invade.

Dense Cape Broom thickets provide cover for rabbits and foxes.

Cape Broom is rarely a problem in well-managed pastures because the seedlings are readily eaten by stock. However old broom infestations on neglected land can displace productive pasture and require significant effort to control.

Cape Broom is a fire hazard in wooded areas where it can form a dense and flammable understorey.



Distribution

Cape Broom is native to the Mediterranean and was introduced to Australia as an ornamental garden plant.

Infestations occur in areas receiving 400 to 950 mm annual rainfall. It is most common in roadside areas and in native vegetation. It grows in a wide range of conditions but does best in sandy soils.

Most infestations begin in disturbed areas such as timber plantations, quarries and road construction sites. Seed thrown from the drying pods in summer aid dispersal into native vegetation. Longer distance dispersal is due mainly to road graders and earth moving equipment.

The germination of dormant seed is triggered by fire, which can lead to mass germination.

Control methods

Small plants can be hand-pulled in spring when the ground is soft. Large shrubs should be cut close to ground level and the stump painted with herbicide. When working in native vegetation, soil disturbance should be minimised.

In pastures, sheep, goats and cattle eat Cape Broom, particularly younger seedlings and new soft shoots. Larger plants may need to be cut or slashed to allow stock better grazing access.

Due to the abundant seed store Cape Broom produces, effective control programs must manage ongoing germination over several years.

For advice on chemical control techniques contact your nearest Natural Resources Centre. Please refer to the *Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia* for advice on chemical control. You can find it on Biosecurity SA's website at www.pir.sa.gov.au

Declarations

The following sections of the NRM Act apply to Cape Broom in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region:

- 175 (2) Cannot transport the plant or anything carrying it**
- 177 (1) Cannot sell the plant**
- 177 (2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant**
- 182 (2) Landowner must control the plant on their land**
- 185 NRM authority may recover costs for control of weeds on roadsides from adjoining landowners**

More information

Please contact your local Natural Resources Centre for further information, advice and assistance in controlling Cape Broom.

Black Hill

115 Maryvale Road, Athelstone 5076

T: 08 8336 0901

Gawler

8 Adelaide Road, Gawler South 5118

T: 08 8523 7700

Willunga

5 Aldinga Road, Willunga 5172

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