

English Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*)

November 2015



English Broom, sometimes known as Scotch 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.

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

Description

English Broom is an erect, deciduous shrub up to 4 m tall. Plants generally live for 10 to 15 years.

Stems are green, perennial and provide most of the photosynthesis. Three-lobed leaves are produced in spring, but for most of the year the stems are leafless.

The pea-like flowers are bright yellow and appear in October and November.

The seed pod is brown or black and hairy at the edges. The pods ripen during summer and burst open as they dry, ejecting the seeds over several meters.

Mature shrubs produce up to 2000 seed annually. The seeds are long-lived with most remaining viable after 4 years.

Seeds germinate mainly in autumn and spring.

Impacts

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

More so than native species, English Broom can grow in winter and tolerates nutrient rich soil.

Dense English Broom thickets provide cover for rabbits and foxes.

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

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



Distribution

English Broom is native to Europe. It has been used in Australia in hedges and as an ornamental garden plant. It is still sometimes sold in nurseries by mistake.

English Broom is currently found at scattered sites in the Mount Lofty Ranges, but it is becoming more widespread in the central hills, Willunga Basin and Fleurieu Peninsula.

English Broom occurs in areas where annual rainfall exceeds 700 mm. In lower rainfall areas it can be present in watercourses and wetlands.

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.

Dormant seed often activated by fire or soil disturbance, which can trigger mass germination.

Control methods

English Broom has few leaves and is frequently overlooked.

Successful control combines a variety of methods to prevent spread, reduce plant size health and to reduce regrowth.

Due to the abundant seed store produced by English Broom, control programs should be maintained for several years to manage ongoing germination.

Sheep, goats and cattle eat English Broom, particularly younger seedlings, and may suppress the development of infestations. Large plants can be cut to provide stock with better grazing access.

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.

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 English 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 English 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

T: 08 8550 3400