

Scotch Broom
Cytisus scoparius

Currently in Montana, noxious weeds infest about 8.2 million acres. Many of these state listed noxious weeds were brought to America as ornamentals for gardens, medicinal purposes, by accident in discarded soil from a ship's ballast, or unintentionally in bags of seed brought from other parts of the world. Whatever the cause of introduction non-native plant species have found their way onto Montana's state listed noxious weed list.

Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) is native to Europe and was introduced into North America as an ornamental in the 1800s. Typical habitats of scotch broom are areas in full sun with sandy soils that have been disturbed, such as open forests, roadsides, grasslands, pastures, cultivated fields, and wastelands, dry meadows, and riverbeds. Scotch broom can grow up to 13 feet tall and has a very aggressive root system consisting of a taproot and numerous lateral roots. Its leaves are compound with three leaflets, and they grow at the stem bases of the lower branches. The leaves are not noticeable in the summertime. Upper stem leaflets are oval shaped and 1" long. They are also dark green on the top and lighter on the bottom, because the underside of the leaf is hairy. The flowers of this plant are bright yellow. They look like sweet pea flowers in bloom from March to June. The flowers are 1" long and occur individually in angles between the leaves and the stem. Scotch broom produces shiny greenish-brown seeds in dark brown-black flat pods that are covered with short white hairs. Each pod produces tiny seeds that can remain viable for up to sixty years! A single plant can produce up to sixty pods in its second year. Scotch broom seeds are collected by ants, which aid in spreading the seeds around, causing new infestation. Scotch broom plants reproduce through both seeds and sprouts at the root crown. Scotch broom plants reproduce through both seeds and sprouts at the crown. Scotch broom is toxic to horses and sheep; if eaten can be fatal. Scotch broom is best managed by the use of herbicides. It is currently only found in two counties in Montana, Sanders and Lincoln.

Please take a few moments to learn about noxious weeds. If noxious weeds are not currently a problem in your area, they may be in the near future. For more information about Montana's state listed noxious weeds, regulated plants, or weed species listed on your county weed list, please contact your local county weed district (can list weed district name here... ex: Lewis & Clark County Weed District) at (406) (Phone number). Or you can contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-5600.