



GORSE

Ulex europaeus



Beki Shoemaker
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Noxious Weed Control Board

- ✱ Other names: Irish furze
- ✱ Gorse is a Class B Designate weed
- ✱ A perennial evergreen shrub in the Fabaceae Family and spreads primarily by seed, but can also spread vegetatively.
- ✱ Gorse is a dense, spiny, evergreen shrub resembling Scotch broom in appearance. It grows up to 10 feet tall with upright, angular stems that change from green to brown as they mature. Its spreading

branches end in sharp spines and have stiff spine-like leaves about 2 inches long. Its yellow, pea-like flowers grow in clusters near the ends of branches. The brown seed pods (resembling pea pods) burst expelling seeds when ripe and are about ½ in length. The seeds are smooth, shiny and olive green to brown in color.

- ✱ This plant produces seeds prolifically; the bursting seed pods scatter seed for several feet. Animals, machinery, and water also carry the seed. Seeds remain viable in the soil for up to 40 years.
- ✱ The plants grow outward forming a center area of dry, dead vegetation. The oil content in the plant combined with the dead plant matter creates a serious fire hazard. (Bandon, Oregon 1936)
- ✱ Once gorse is established, it spreads rapidly, crowding out other plants and forms dense thickets that render the land almost worthless, creating a natural haven for rodents.
- ✱ It grows best in sandy or coarse gravelly soil. It likes gravel bars, fence rows, river banks and rough sites. From there it has the ability to encroach upon agricultural or recreational lands.

CONTROL OPTIONS

- ✱ The best control is to prevent infestations from occurring. Never allow Gorse to set seed. The most effective control programs will often include a combination of herbicides, burning, and cultivation or mowing.



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- ★ Bulldozing and burning gorse is one approach that has been successful.
- ★ For small sites with only a few plants, dig up the plants, or use a weed wrench to pull them up. Be careful to remove as much root as possible, so the plants will not re-sprout.
- ★ Mechanical control, such as mowing or brush cutting is ineffective, since gorse plants re-grow at all times of the year.
- ★ Small isolated infestations can be

controlled with pesticides containing the active ingredient *glyphosate* (as in Roundup Pro, Glyfos, etc.) though the waxy cuticle inhibits herbicide penetration. It requires repeated applications of pesticides over several years to control large infestations of gorse. Application methods vary for the type and size of the infestation. Foliar applications, spraying the leaves and stems, are recommended for large infestations. For smaller infestations apply product to cut stems after cutting off the upper portions of the plant.

- ★ For selective control of gorse in agricultural settings (pastures, hayfields, etc.), an herbicide containing the active ingredient *aminopyralid* (example: Milestone, Milestone VM, etc.) may be a preferred choice. *Aminopyralid* products will not harm grass and can be used around livestock provided all label precautions are followed.
- ★ When using herbicides be sure to read and follow all label instructions and obey all label precautions. (Note: pesticide product registration is renewed annually and product names and formulations may vary from year to year.
- ★ For information about the biological control of Gorse, see the [WSU Extension Integrated Weed Control Project](#).

