

TACKLING Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*)

Invasive species have significant impacts on the environment, human health, infrastructure and the economy in the Metro Vancouver region.

Scotch broom originated in Europe and was introduced to Vancouver Island as a garden plant in the 1850s. It is now common throughout Metro Vancouver, the Sunshine Coast and Vancouver Island.

IMPACTS

Scotch broom is a fast-growing shrub that quickly forms dense patches where little else can grow. It thrives in a variety of conditions but prefers sandy, well-drained soil and full sun. It is particularly damaging to sensitive ecosystems and is highly flammable, so large patches increase fire risk. This plant also produces large amounts of seeds that can survive in the soil for decades.

IDENTIFICATION

- **Lifecycle:** Perennial shrub
- **Stem:** Up to 3 metres tall and woody
- **Leaves:** 5 to 20 millimetres long, oval, alternating on either side of the stem
- **Flowers:** Yellow, sometimes tinged with red or orange; bloom from March until June
- **Seeds:** Pea pods (green when young and black when mature); each plant can produce up to 10,000 seeds per year



Flowering stem

CREDIT: ISCMV



Ripe seed pods



Leaves

CREDIT: ISCMV

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

To prevent further spread across the region and beyond, it is best not purchase, trade, or grow Scotch broom. If this plant is already present, it is critical to ensure it does not invade adjacent yards, parks and natural areas. Effective invasive plant management typically involves a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling Scotch broom on private property or where permission has been granted by the land owner or manager. Other methods may be used by professionals.

CONTROL STRATEGY	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual	Young plants with stems smaller than a pencil: pull by hand removing the entire plant	Individual plants, sites with less than 50 plants or sensitive sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Causes minimal harm to surrounding plants• May disturb seeds in soil and encourage growth of new plants• Cut plants may re-sprout• Remove plants from site to reduce fire risk
	Older plants with stems larger than a pencil: cut at the base		

When possible, control Scotch broom in June before the plants produce seeds. Restore the area with native or non-invasive plants and watch for regrowth. New seedlings may grow for several years.

How Can You Help?

- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out growgreenguide.ca for suggestions.
- Remove any plant parts or seeds from clothing, pets, tools, vehicles, etc.
- Do not place invasive plants in your backyard composter, as the temperature will not become hot enough to destroy the seeds and roots.
- To reduce the spread of invasive species, dispose of yard waste and soil appropriately. Visit your municipality's website for more information.
- Download the '[Report Invasives BC](#)' app to identify and report invasive species.
- Join a stewardship group and help remove invasive species from local parks.

For the complete set of best management practices for Scotch broom, and other key invasive species, visit MetroVancouver.org and search 'Invasive Species'.



A volunteer removing scotch broom in Campbell Valley Regional Park in the Township of Langley