



# Whatcom Weeds

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## PORTUGUESE BROOM

*Cytisus striatus*

**THREAT:** Portuguese broom, a native to Europe, was introduced to North America for landscaping and soil stabilization uses. It has escaped cultivation and invaded natural areas in California and Oregon, including savannah, scrub and open forest. Portuguese broom forms dense thickets, replacing native vegetation. Like other brooms, this plant burns readily and the seeds remain viable for years. Additionally, the seeds of Portuguese broom are toxic to ungulates.

**DESCRIPTION:** Portuguese broom is a deciduous shrub in the legume family. It grows up to 10 feet tall, although may be smaller. There are many stems, which are sparsely covered with dark green leaves. The leaves are more numerous towards the ends of the stems, and each leaf is composed of 1 to 3 leaflets.

Portuguese broom has pale yellow pea-like flowers in the spring. Seeds are borne in an inflated pod ( $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $1\frac{3}{4}$  " long), which is densely covered with whitish hairs. After drying, the pods split open and the seeds are ejected from the plant. Portuguese broom is very similar to Scotch broom, being distinguished primarily by its paler yellow flowers and the white, hairy seedpods. Additionally, the stems of Portuguese broom are 8 to 10 sided, while those of Scotch broom are 5 to 6 sided.

**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** Portuguese broom can be controlled using mechanical control. Small plants can be hand pulled in moist conditions, while large plants can be dug or removed with a weed wrench. Mowing can be used to prevent seed production. If the plant is cut, Portuguese broom can usually resprout from the stump. However, plants cut flush to the ground may not resprout, especially during drought conditions. There is no information on the use of herbicides to control this species.



