

Broom Snakeweed

(Gutierrezia sarothrae)



Where does it grow? It occurs in the dry areas of eastern Oregon. It does not grow in western Oregon. It is commonly associated with big sagebrush, rabbitbrushes, cheatgrass, and juniper. It commonly inhabits dry, well drained, sandy, gravelly, or clayey loams. It apparently does not occur on saline and alkaline soils. It occurs at elevations ranging from 4,000 to 8,000 feet.

Is it important? It is considered worthless as a forage throughout most of the range. It is used as a winter forage in some areas but only because of the lack of more suitable and desirable forage. It has been known to occasionally poison both sheep and cattle.

What does it look like? Broom snakeweed is a clustered perennial half-shrub 10-24 inches tall. It has numerous slender, stiffly erect stems. The leaves are narrow, erect, and gray-green in color. The yellow flowers occur in very small heads. They are produced either singly or in small clusters at the tips of the numerous branches.

Description:

Length of Life--Perennial half-shrub.

Height--10 to 24 inches.

How does it spread?--By seeds in burned and overgrazed areas.

Seeds--Reverse egg-shaped with very fine hairs.

Leaves--Narrow, located alternately along the stem.

Stems--Round, slender, rigid, erect, and numerous from a woody base.
They are unbranched except for the flower-bearing branchlets near the top.

Roots--Tap root with numerous lateral roots.

Is it poisonous? Yes, it is poisonous if taken in large enough amounts. In acute cases death occurs, but more commonly the major result of poisoning is abortion. Cases of abortion have been noted in both cattle and sheep.

Does it look like anything else? Yes, gray rabbitbrush and broom snakeweed are often confused with each other. However, broom snakeweed is a half-shrub and blooms early in the growing season. Gray rabbitbrush is a shrub and blooms in the fall.

Overall, this plant is considered a pest in most areas in which it occurs.