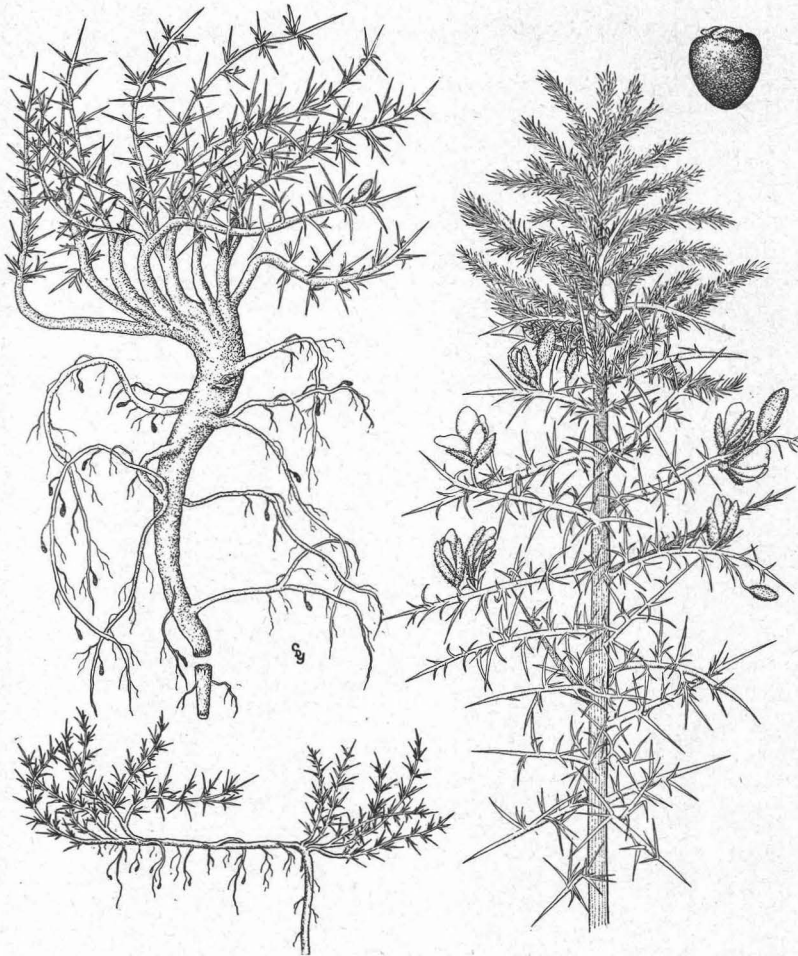


Gorse

LAWRENCE JENKINS

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GORSE—*Ulex europaeus*—Showing branch with flowers, seed pods and spines; individual crown and roots with nitrogen-fixing nodules; branch that has lodged onto the ground and taken root, and seed. Seed magnified 4 diameters.

Oregon State System of Higher Education
Federal Cooperative Extension Service
Oregon State College
Corvallis

Gorse

(*Ulex europaeus*)

By LAWRENCE JENKINS and E. R. JACKMAN*

Illustrations by Cathrine Davis Young

Other names: Irish furze, Furze.

This plant is not found very generally over the state as yet, but offers a constant threat of becoming a serious menace, particularly on range land of western Oregon. It is found mainly along the coast in Coos, Curry, and Lane counties. New infestations occur nearly every year in the Rogue River and Willamette valleys. It reproduces by seed and by rooting along the stem. First introduced and planted for an ornamental, it has escaped cultivation and has practically taken several thousand acres of range land in Coos and Curry counties. It is locally reported that this weed was largely responsible for the rapid spread of the fire that in 1936 destroyed the town of Bandon in Coos county.

Gorse resembles Scotch Broom, but is more bushy and produces numerous stiff spines from a fraction of an inch to nearly 3 inches long. It commonly grows from 2 to 5 feet tall. Stems are much branched and woody, with ribs spaced about 1/16 inch apart running lengthwise of the stem. Leaves have more the nature of small spines than true leaves. Flowers are a showy yellow, borne on short stems from the leaf axils. Seeds are about 1/8 inch long, reddish brown, smooth, glossy, and heart-shaped. Many seeds are produced in each of the numerous pods that on maturity split open and throw the seeds several feet. Pods are dark brown (nearly black), about 1/4 inch in diameter, about 1/2 inch long, and are covered with many white silky hairs. This black pod is enclosed in a golden-brown sheath, also covered with white hairs.

Control. Most of the new growth apparently comes from new shoots produced from the crown that is generally found from within 1 inch of the surface to 6 to 8 inches underground. The root system is woody and very extensive. Because of the sandy nature of much of the land where this weed grows, chemicals have given erratic results. In sandy soil, sodium chlorate is washed out before a kill can be completed. It is difficult to get a proper seal of the soil to confine carbon bisulphide gas. Arsenic-bearing chemicals might be the best, but because of the stock-poisoning hazard they cannot be recommended generally. An application of sodium chlorate applied at a time when from 3 to 5 inches of rain can be expected that season offers the best chance for success.

The best procedure is to remove the thorny foliage by burning or scraping with a bulldozer or similar equipment. Then plow deeply and harrow or spring-tooth to pull crowns and roots to the surface. These then may be raked up and destroyed. Individual plants can be grubbed out by hand. Care should be exercised to dig the plant out below the crown. Goats have been used to keep the pest in check.

Other methods of controlling perennial weeds are discussed in Extension Bulletin 510.

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