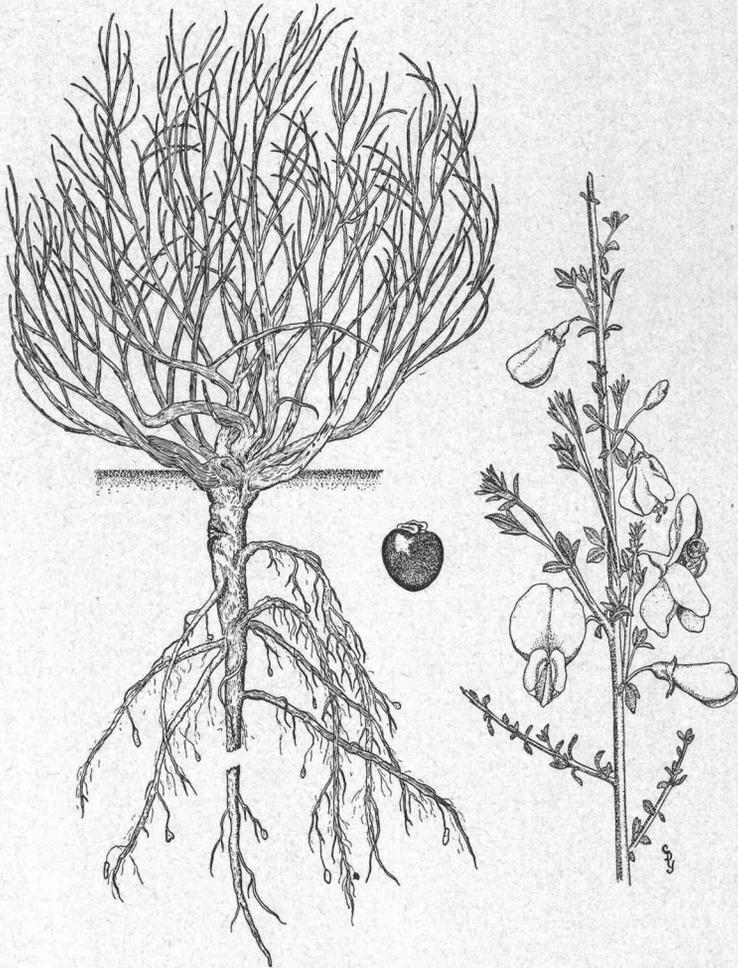


# Scotch Broom

LAWRENCE JENKINS

E. R. JACKMAN



SCOTCH BROOM—*Cytisus scoparius*—Showing branch with leaves and flowers, nature of plant growth with roots and nitrogen-fixing nodules, and seed. Seed magnified 3 diameters.

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

# Scotch Broom

(*Cytisus scoparius*)

By LAWRENCE JENKINS and E. R. JACKMAN\*

Illustrations by Cathrine Davis Young

Scotch broom is a showy perennial shrub widely planted as an ornamental and so well adapted to western Oregon that it has escaped from such plantings and has become a rapidly spreading pest. Numerous roadside patches are a joy to the traveler, but a headache to owners of adjacent land. The largest patches are in the coastal counties, but it is abundant in places in the Rogue River and Willamette valleys. It is occasionally found in lower elevations in eastern Oregon. It is a good soil binder and prevents erosion, particularly in sandy soils along the coast. Because of its ability to spread by throwing its seed, it should not be planted where adjacent valuable pasture land may be endangered.

Scotch Broom grows from 3 to 8 feet tall, is woody, and produces a dense growth of many-branched, angled stems. Leaflets are from  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch long and generally are produced 3 in a group. Deep yellow, showy flowers appear with the first sign of spring, and the plant continues to bloom for 2 months or more. Most plants are a mass of bloom fairly lighting the landscape on a gray day. Slender stems growing from the leaf's axils bear the flowers. Flat pods covered with long, soft hairs are produced in profusion, each pod containing several seeds. At maturity these pods snap open and throw the seeds several feet. Seeds are from  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long, have flat sides, are oblong, glossy, and colored greenish brown to reddish brown.

There is another variety of Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius Andreanus*) that attracts much interest because of showy, dark crimson wings on the flowers. It is occasionally found growing with the common Scotch broom.

**Damage.** The chief damage is that the plant aggressively occupies valuable pasture land and has very little forage value. It is reputed to be poisonous,† producing paralysis, but stock in Oregon seldom touch it if they have anything else to eat. It is useful as a soil binder, and since it is a legume it is also a soil builder.

**Control.** If on plowland, the woody, rank growth should be removed by cutting, grubbing, or burning a short time before the plant blooms. The land should then be plowed as deeply as possible and given several cultivations during the balance of the season. Each shrub produces thousands of seeds every year, so in order to kill plants coming from seed and insure complete control, the area should be seeded to a row crop that will permit cultivation for a year or two. Small patches can be grubbed out. Frequent burning, preferably with a weed burner, will kill small patches that are inaccessible for cultivation or grubbing. Chemicals have not given satisfactory control of this plant. Extension Bulletin 510 contains suggestions for other methods of controlling perennial weeds.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:** The authors thank Dr. Helen M. Gilkey, Curator of the Herbarium, for reading the manuscript and checking the description of the plant. Professor G. R. Hyslop, In Charge, Division of Plant Industries, made many helpful suggestions.

\* E. R. Jackman is Extension Specialist in Farm Crops and Lawrence Jenkins is Assistant Extension Specialist in Farm Crops at Oregon State College.

† Important Western Browse Plants. U.S.D.A. Misc. Publication 101.

---

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics

Wm. A. Schoenfeld, Director

Oregon State College and United States Department of Agriculture, Cooperating  
Printed and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914