

# English Broom

*(Cytisus scoparius)*

## Weed management Guide



English Broom, sometimes known as Scotch Broom, is a perennial shrub that invades the understorey of grassy woodland vegetation. It is a significant weed in the higher rainfall areas of the Mount Lofty Ranges.

English Broom is a declared weed under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019.

### Description

English Broom is a perennial, erect, deciduous shrub up to 4 m tall. Plants generally live for 10 to 15 years. The stems are green, aging to brown, with prominent ridges.

Three-lobed leaves are produced in spring, with peak flowering in October to December. The pea-like flowers are bright yellow and the seed pods are brown or black and hairy at the edges. The pods ripen during summer and burst open as they dry, ejecting the seeds over several meters.

Mature shrubs produce up to 2000 seeds annually. These are long-lived with most remaining viable even after four years. Seeds germinate mainly in autumn and spring.

### Impacts

English Broom invades native grassland, woodland and watercourses where it forms dense thickets. This weed can displace native groundcover species and shrubs, reducing biodiversity and habitat.

The plants increase nitrogen levels in the soil which can help other pest plants to invade. More so than native species, English Broom can grow in winter and tolerates nutrient-rich soil. Dense English Broom thickets provide cover for rabbits and foxes. It is rarely a problem in well-managed pastures because the seedlings are readily eaten by stock. However old Broom infestations in neglected land can displace productive pasture and will require significant effort to control. English Broom is a fire hazard in forest areas where it can form a dense and flammable understorey.

## Distribution

English Broom is native to Europe. It has been used in Australia in hedges and as an ornamental garden plant and is still sometimes sold in nurseries by mistake.

English Broom is widespread across the Central Hills and also found in a few sites on the Fleurieu Peninsula.

The weed grows in areas where annual rainfall exceeds 700 mm although in lower rainfall areas, it can be present in watercourses and wetlands.

Seeds thrown from the drying pods in summer can disperse into native vegetation. Longer distance dispersal is due mainly to road graders and other earth moving equipment. Seed can also be spread on soil attached to footwear or vehicles.

Dormant seed often become activated by fire or soil disturbance, which can trigger mass germination.

## Traditional control methods

English Broom has few leaves and is frequently overlooked. Successful control combines a variety of methods to reduce plant size and regrowth, and to prevent it spreading. Due to the abundant seed store produced by English Broom, control programs should be maintained to manage ongoing germination.

Sheep, goats and cattle eat English Broom, particularly younger seedlings, and may suppress the development of infestations. Large plants can be cut to provide stock with better grazing access.

Small plants can be hand-pulled in spring when the ground is soft. Large shrubs should be cut close to ground level and the stump painted with herbicide. Native vegetation is especially susceptible to many herbicides. Treatment must be carefully tailored to avoid damage.

For advice on chemical control techniques, contact the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board (contacts below). You can also check the Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia, available at [pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity](http://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity)

## Biocontrol

The English Broom gall mite is a biocontrol insect that can, in some cases, kill plants or suppress growth. The current distribution of this biocontrol is not fully known, but it is easily spread by tying a bouquet of gall-infested stems onto a Broom plant. For initial releases, choose Broom plants growing in shaded or semi-shaded areas.

As with all biocontrol, the gall mite will only provide partial control. For long term control, other methods will need to be used.

## Declarations

The following sections of the Landscape SA Act 2019 apply to English Broom in the Hills and Fleurieu region: 186 (2) Cannot transport the plant or anything carrying it, 188 (1) Cannot sell the plant, 188 (2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant, 192 (2) Landowner must control the plant on their land, 194 regional landscape board may recover costs for control of weeds on roadsides from adjoining landowners.



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## Contact the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board

**Mount Barker:** Corner Mann and Walker streets, Mount Barker, 5251  
Phone: (08) 8391 7500

**Email:** [hf.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au](mailto:hf.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au)



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