

# Invasive Plant Species:

## Gorse

(*Ulex europaeus*)



**This plant contains volatile oils in the stems, making it a fire hazard.**

Originally brought to BC as an ornamental plant from Western Europe, gorse has since escaped garden beds throughout the province. This plant prefers full sun and thrives in poor quality soil along roadsides, in fields and bluffs. Seeds are ejected from the seed pods and can subsequently be spread by animals, water and vehicles.

### Identification

Gorse has bright yellow, pea-like flowers on long hairy stalks. The stem resembles an evergreen shrub standing 1-3 m tall and covered in green spines. This plant produces black, hairy seed pods and can be mistaken for Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) which produces similar seeds and bright yellow flowers.

### Impacts

Gorse poses a risk to people, the environment and the economy. The branches contain highly volatile oils that pose a wildfire risk during times of drought. This plant also prevents native plant growth which negatively impacts biodiversity due to less forage for wildlife. Outcompeting native species also increases the risk for erosion to take place. Economic impacts include the loss of crop land, rangelands and recreational land use where gorse is established.



**Gorse produces black, hairy seed pods. Each shrub can produce up to 8000 seeds per year!**

### Why is Gorse a Problem?

Gorse is an invasive species that outcompetes native plants due to the plant's adaptability to a variety of environmental conditions. This loss in habitat will lower plant and animal species biodiversity. While also making invaded areas inaccessible because of the dense growth covered in sharp spines.

Gorse is a risk to people's safety, environmental health and farmers that rely on their land to make a living.



## Controlling Gorse on Your Property

Preventing gorse from establishing is the best management strategy. Removing seeds from any equipment, clothing or animals to prevent spread is imperative.

### DO

- Minimize soil disturbance and quickly revegetate disturbed areas.
- Begin treatment as soon as possible. The larger the infestation, the more damage it can cause and the more difficult it is to eradicate.
- Dig up smaller patches, including all root fragments.
- Use larger machinery to remove larger patches.
- Use glyphosate herbicide appropriate to site conditions if necessary. Follow instructions on label.
- Cut plants while they are in flowering stage (March – May) as close to the soil as possible to prevent seed production.

### DON'T

- **Do not** move or reuse soils contaminated with gorse. The seeds are viable in the soil for up to 40 years.
- **Do not** compost gorse, as it can still produce viable seeds.
- **Do not** cut or mow gorse without secondary treatment with herbicide and/or complete removal. Cutting alone with trigger regrowth.

**Gorse can produce 18,000 seeds for every mature plant!**

## Proper Disposal

For safe disposal, place plant material in garbage bags labeled "invasive species," tied off using a gooseneck tie and zap strap and take to Bings Creek Solid Waste Management Facility (3900 Drinkwater Road, Duncan) or Peerless Road Drop-off Depot (10830 Peerless Road, Ladysmith).

### For more information on invasive plant species visit

[www.northcowichan.ca/Plants](http://www.northcowichan.ca/Plants)  
Invasive Species Council of BC (ISC)  
<https://bcinvasives.ca/>  
Reporting Invasive Species  
[www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species](http://www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species)

Need help identifying potential invasive species on your property?  
Email us a picture!

### Contact us:

E [environment@northcowichan.ca](mailto:environment@northcowichan.ca)

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