



Broom: An invasive plant

What are the shrubs with those showy yellow flowers?

You may recognize this plant as one you've seen in a state park, along the highway or even in your neighbor's yard. What you're looking at is an invasive plant called broom. Three kinds of broom are generally found in our state parks: French broom, Spanish broom, and Scotch broom.

What is Broom?

Brooms are highly invasive non-native shrubs that were introduced into California from Europe during the 1800s to prevent soil erosion and as ornamental plants. In California's mild Mediterranean climate, broom quickly spread and now can be found in many of our state parks. All three species of broom can be identified by the clusters of yellow sweet-pea-shaped flowers and seeds in pea pods. The shrubs can grow to over six feet in height and have small green leaves. These plants may be found by themselves or in large clusters.

Why are these "bad" plants?

Broom is considered to be one of the top ten worst invasive plants in California. One reason for this is broom's ability to release



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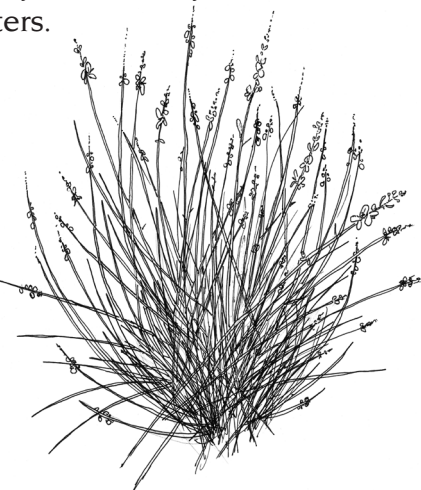
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over 8,000 seeds in one year. With a tough protective cover, these seeds become a “seed bank” and can remain in the soil, shielded from the elements and ready to sprout, for decades.

Broom is also known for dominating areas with thousands of plants, creating an impenetrable thicket. Native plants—the food source for wildlife—are crowded out while the brooms’ leaves and seeds are toxic to many animals, further degrading the habitat. The dense stands also create a dangerous source of fuel for wildfires.

Broom is also extremely difficult to eradicate. Several methods of removal are used in state parks: manually pulling the plant from the ground, mechanically cutting it, controlled burns, and spraying the plant with herbicides. Methods are combined as part of an integrated strategy. Removal is only the beginning, though. In order to permanently restore an infested area, the seed bank must be exhausted and that area must be checked on a regular basis, and any new plants removed.

How can you make a difference?

Listed below are a few things anyone can do to help with the fight against broom.

- Plant only certified sterile brooms, and consider local native plants for your garden instead, particularly if you live near a natural area.
- Clean the mud from your shoes, sports equipment and car after you visit an infected area to prevent transferring seeds from area to area.
- Volunteer to help remove non-native plants. Contact your local state park for possible volunteer opportunities.

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