

GORSE

Ulex europaeus



INVASIVE PLANT ALERT



One of the biggest threats to natural ecosystems in Saanich is the spread of invasive non-native plants. The District of Saanich appreciates the cooperation of all residents in removing Gorse from private property.

For assistance see contacts on reverse.

This spiny invader fueled fires that burnt down an Oregon town... twice.*

Why is Gorse a problem?

Warning: spiny invasive

- Threat to native (including rare) ecosystems and wildlife habitat.
- Dense, impenetrable thickets impact activities (ie. recreation and agriculture).
- Can pose a significant fire hazard with oil that burns like fuel.
- Alters soil conditions and increases erosion on slopes.

What does it look like?

- Spiny evergreen shrub.
- 1-3 metres tall, densely branched.
- Small leaves ending in rigid spines.
- Fragrant, yellow pea-like flowers develop into small, flat black hairy seedpods.

Could be confused with:

- Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) is similar, but can be distinguished from Gorse by its lack of spines.

Distribution:

- Native to Europe.
- Invasions primarily in Southwest BC; a serious invader in other countries including the US, Australia and New Zealand.

Habitat and Biology:

- Perennial shrub in the Pea Family.
- Mature plants can flower February to July, producing an average 8,000 seeds annually per plant (viable in soil 25-40 years).
- Shrubs reproduce by seed; pods explode and eject the seeds. Dispersed by animals, water and machinery.
- Very competitive, displaces native plants and impacting rare ecosystems in this region.
- Alters soil conditions by fixing nitrogen and acidifying soil; suppresses tree growth.
- Found especially in dry, open, sandy or rocky clearing, coastal bluffs and disturbed areas such as roadsides.

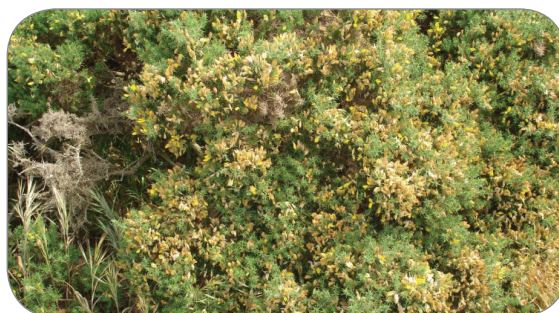


Photo credits: D. Polster, Jjhake
* Footnote: Bandon Oregon 1914 and 1936

What should I do?

- **Spread the word, not the plant:** don't buy or plant Gorse
- **Inform:** please contact Saanich (as below) to report locations.
- **Stop seed spread:** brush/clean off clothing, tires and equipment before leaving the infested area.
- **Remove:** if you have properly identified Gorse on your property, use the best control methods (below) to eliminate it.
- **Monitor:** annually return to the site in the spring and summer for several years to continue treatment.
- **Replant:** after effectively eliminating this species over time, replant with non-invasive plants (such as appropriate native species).
- **Volunteer:** find out more about volunteering to control priority invasive species with Saanich at saanich.ca/pullingtogether.

Caution: wear puncture-resistant, protective clothing when in contact with this plant. When dealing with larger shrubs especially, face and eye protection is recommended.



Small populations (< 25 plants)

- **Manual removal:** remove young plants by hand, pulling gently to remove all the roots (best after rains). A small hand tool can be used to ease the roots out.
- Larger, mature plants can be removed by cutting the stem near the base (e.g. brush saw or chainsaw) just before flowering or before seed set. If removal is late (during flowering): cut and bag flower-heads first for secure disposal.
- Remove roots of larger plants if possible (using shovel) November to March.
- All manual removal: care should be taken to minimize soil disturbance.
- Removal of Gorse plant litter on the ground helps natural vegetation to regenerate.
- Note: burning and mechanical disturbance favours high seedling density for Gorse.

Large populations

- Contact Environmental Services to assist you in making a plan to treat large populations based on the site conditions and best management practices.

Proper Disposal

- The best option is to place all plant parts in tarps (or bags for small plants), take to Hartland Landfill and identify as invasive plants
- Dispose in the Saanich Garden Waste drop off ONLY if no seeds are present
- **DO NOT COMPOST!**

Who do you call?

Contact Saanich for assistance and more information about Gorse, other invasive plants and volunteer opportunities.

On Public Lands:

Saanich Parks:
250-475-5522 or parks@saanich.ca

On Private Land:

Saanich Environmental Services:
250-475-5471 or planning@saanich.ca

Other resources

Report-a-Weed BC
reportaweedbc.ca

Invasive Species Council of BC
bcinvasives.ca

King County Noxious Weed Program
kingcounty.gov

Saanich Native Plant List
saanich.ca/environment
(tools and resources)