

"Recovery is slow and gorse is forever"

(Taylor Groves, Environmental Scientist, CA State Parks)

Eradication:

Gorse removal is a long-term commitment due to seed longevity. The site must be re-treated yearly with no exception long into the foreseeable future. Integrated pest management has shown the best results.

Manually or mechanically remove by hand pulling or weed wrenching plants under five feet, making sure to remove as much root as possible. This is easiest in early spring when soil is still moist.

Cutting larger plants is necessary but gorse will quickly sprout from the stump without the use of herbicides. Continued cutting of new growth can eventually deplete the roots. Mow seedlings at 5".

Revegetating the area with native plants can help maintain shade that will slow seed germination.

The Del Norte County Department of Agriculture has weed wrenches available for loan at no cost. Come into the office and complete the Weed Wrench Loan Agreement form.



Photo: Gorse removal-Del Norte County Ag Dept.

If you find gorse growing on your property in Del Norte County, please contact the Agriculture Office at 707-464-0878. The county will work with property owners to eradicate gorse.

Sources:

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Broadfield, Nicholas, and Melinda T. McHenry. "A World of Gorse: Persistence of *Ulex Europaeus* in Managed Landscapes." *Plants*, vol. 8, no. 11, Nov. 2019, p. 523, <https://www.mdpi.com/2223-7747/8/11/523>

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Turner, Mark, and Phyllis Gustafson. *Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest*. Timber Press (OR), 2006.

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Gorse

Ulex europaeus



**Del Norte County
Department of Agriculture**

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History:

Gorse is native to central and western Europe and the British Isles. It is used for fuel and fodder. Gorse was introduced to the eastern U.S. as an ornamental and hedge plant in the early 1800s, it began occurring outside of cultivated areas by 1900. Gorse was brought to Oregon as an ornamental plant in the late 19th century.

Distribution:

Gorse has become an established invasive plant through out the world. It is listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as one of the top 100 invasive plants on earth. In the United States gorse has become an established invasive in 10 states, including Hawaii.



(Boardfield and McHenry)

Red = introduced populations, Lt. Blue= native, Black= Unknown

Life Cycle:

Gorse plants live up to 30 years and can begin flowering 18 months after germination. Gorse will flower at least once annually after its second year of growth. Flowering typically occurs late winter and early spring. Flowers are pollinated by bees and insects.

Mature plants can produce approximately 6,000-18,000 fertile seeds annually. The seeds can remain viable in the soil for 20 years. Most seeds fall directly under the plant, bursting pods can eject seeds up to 16 feet. Wind, birds, animals, and insects also help disperse seeds. Gorse can resprout from cut stems.

Habitat:

Gorse prefers sandy, infertile, well-drained soils, and temperate climates. It will invade disturbed areas after fire, logging, overgrazing, and pop up in fence rows. Gorse is often found in areas with other invasive species such as Scotch broom and foxglove.

Description:

Gorse is a woody perennial shrub that can grow from 8-16 feet tall. Seedlings have small alternate leaves of three leaflets that turn to scales or stiff spines as the plant matures. Young stems are hairy with the hairs turning to thorns with age. Gorse produces pea-like flowers that are bright yellow and fragrant. Gorse looks like Scotch broom but it is covered in stiff needle-like spines.

Ecological Concerns:

Gorse leaf litter acidifies the soil and gorse roots harbor nitrogen fixing bacteria. These attributes cause soil to no longer support native plants, allowing gorse to become established and expand. Animals will not forage on mature plants or walk through it due to the stiff spines covering the plant. Gorse is extremely flammable due to oils in the plant, increasing the risk of catastrophic fires. Re-growth after fire is rapid.



Photo: Gorse infestation-Del Norte Agriculture



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