



Invasive Plant Atlas of New England

Catalog of Species Search Results



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Cytisus scoparius (Scotch broom)

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COMMON NAME

Scotch broom

FULL SCIENTIFIC NAME

Cytisus scoparius (L.) Link

FAMILY NAME COMMON

Pea family

FAMILY SCIENTIFIC NAME

Fabaceae

IMAGES



Flowers



Habit



Habit/Habitat



Flowers on



Incursion

branch

NOMENCLATURE/SYNONYMS

Synonyms: *Sarothamnus scoparius* (L.) Wimmer ex Koch

DESCRIPTION

Botanical Glossary

Cytisus scoparius is a short perennial shrub that grows up to 2 m (6.5 ft.) tall. The green branches are stiff, slender and 5-angled. The stems remain green throughout the year. The leaves are arranged alternately. The upper surface of the leaf is dark green while the lower surface is lighter and pubescent. The lower leaves of the plant are small, have petioles measuring 2-8 mm (0.07-0.3 in.) in length, and are 3-foliate. The leaflets are obovate in shape, and measure 5-10 mm (0.25-0.4 in.) in length. The upper leaves are sessile, simple and undivided.

The flowers of *Cytisus scoparius* are usually bright yellow (though there are many cultivars that range from pale yellow to pink to red in color). They are either solitary or paired in the upper axils of the plant, forming long, terminal racemes. The flowers measure 2-2.5 cm (0.75-1 in.) in length. The bilabiate calyx is glabrous and measures 7 mm (0.25 in.) long. Blooming occurs in late May or June. The fruit are brownish pods (legumes) that ripen during the late summer. They measure 3-5 cm (1-2 in.) in length and are hairy along the margins. The seeds are small, measuring 2 mm (0.7 in.) in length. They are multicolored (green, brown, dark brown, rusty) and generally obovate to round in shape.

Page References Bailey 568, Fernald 890, Gleason & Cronquist 277, Holmgren 259, Magee & Ahles 652, Newcomb 106, Peterson & McKenny 154. See reference section below for full citations.

SIMILAR SPECIES

REPRODUCTIVE/DISPERSAL MECHANISMS

Cytisus scoparius reproduces primarily via seed. Its seed capsules have a capacity for ballistic dispersal, most notably when dry. Once ejected, dispersal of the seeds can be further aided by wind. Moving water is also a possible method of seed dispersal. Some vegetative reproduction can occur in the form of resprouting.

DISTRIBUTION

Cytisus scoparius is native to the British Isles and central and southern Europe. It is found in British Columbia and the western U.S. It is also found from Maine to Michigan and south from Alabama to Georgia. It occurs in all of the New England states

with the exception of Vermont, primarily in coastal regions. It is currently most problematic in the western U.S. and British Columbia; it has spread to occupy more than 2 million acres in CA, WA and OR (Bossard, 1996).

HISTORY OF INTRODUCTION IN NEW ENGLAND

Cytisus scoparius was planted on the islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vinyard in the late 1800's for a combination of its appearance and its dune stabilizing capabilities. It was planted near Provincetown, MA in 1875 for much the same reasons. An 1895 record from Woods Hole Massachusetts noted that it had "firmly established" in a field behind a local workshop (Rhodora, Vol. 2: 89). Robinson (1908) reported that *Cytisus scoparius* was found in "sandy barrens, etc." from southeast Massachusetts to Virginia and southwest.

HABITATS IN NEW ENGLAND

Coastal Beach or Dune
Edge
Pasture
Yard or Garden

Cytisus scoparius is well adapted to dry sandy soils and grows well in full sunlight. It can be found along roadsides, coastal sites, disturbed sites, pastures and dry scrubland.

THREATS

Cytisus scoparius has been recognized as a pest weed in the interior valleys along the West coast of the U.S. since the 1920s. It is very competitive in areas with poor soils because of its association with nitrogen fixing bacteria. It has demonstrated the ability to form dense monospecific stands along roadways and waterways. It can also invade native grasslands, pastures and cultivated fields, making it an agricultural pest. To date, *Cytisus scoparius* has not had the level of negative impact in New England that it has had in the western U.S. and Canada.

MANAGEMENT LINKS

[Canadian Forest Service](#)

[The Nature Conservancy](#)

DOCUMENTATION NEEDS

Documentation required: A specific photograph or mounted snippet of a branch with flowers.

Best time for documentation: Summer, fall, winter.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Integrated Taxonomic Information System](#)

Taxonomic information about the species

[The PLANTS database](#)

General information and map

[The Nature Conservancy](#)

Extensive description and control information

[University of Connecticut Plants Database](#)

Images and descriptive information

[Virginia Tech Dendrology](#)

Images and brief description

[The Nature Conservancy](#)

[Redwood National Park](#)

[National Invasive Species Information Center](#)

Additional links

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DATA RETRIEVAL

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MAPS OF PLANT DISTRIBUTION IN NEW ENGLAND

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