**Cytisus scoparius**  
(Scotch broom)

**COMMON NAME**
Scotch broom

**FULL SCIENTIFIC NAME**
*Cytisus scoparius* (L.) Link

**FAMILY NAME COMMON**
Pea family

**FAMILY SCIENTIFIC NAME**
Fabaceae

**IMAGES**

- Flowers
- Habit/Habitat
- Flowers on Incursion
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.


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 is 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 Vineyard 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

REFERENCES


and Management. Tall Timbers Research Station, Miscellaneous
Publication No. 11.


DATA RETRIEVAL

Select a task by clicking the radio button and then click "Submit Selection."

- Formatted display as table
- Export as comma-delimited text file

Submit Selection

MAPS OF PLANT DISTRIBUTION IN NEW ENGLAND

Select a study area by clicking the radio button and then click "Submit Selection."

- The whole New England area
- One or more states
- One or more counties
- One or more towns (county sub-divisions)

Submit Selection