

**Weed of
National Significance**

GORSE/FURZE

(Ulex europaeus)



Weed: gorse

Jackie Miles/Max Campbell

Why is gorse a weed?

- Highly invasive, reducing biodiversity
- Seed is long lived in the soil (25yrs +)
- Shrubs can live for several decades
- Harbours feral animals
- Restricts access (human and stock)
- Outcompetes desirable vegetation, both native and exotic (e.g. pastures)
- Can reduce pasture viability and stocking rates
- Increases fuel load and potential for fire
- Grows in many soil types

Description

Plant: spiny shrub, densely branched, to 3m high, hairy ribbed stems, seedlings can take two years to become seed producing shrubs

Leaves: leaves with 3 leaflets are found on young growth, on mature branches these become dark green, narrow, stiff spines with no stalks

Seeds: smooth, green to brown, heart shaped, 2 to 6 seeds per pod, dropped throughout summer, germinate from late spring to early autumn

Flowers: pea like, pure yellow, 1.5-2.5cm long, during autumn and spring

Dispersal via

- The plant has spread from ornamental garden planting and for hedges that were grown in early years of settlement
- Explosive release of seeds around parent plants
- Dumping of plants and soil containing seeds
- Seeds can be carried along water courses
- Seed attaches to animals such as sheep (in wool) and on other animals feeding among plants during the seeding period
- In soil on machinery and vehicles

Status

Gorse is listed as a class 3 noxious weed in all council areas within the Molonglo Catchment. The plant must be fully and continuously suppressed and destroyed and the plant may not be sold propagated or knowingly distributed.

In the ACT, gorse is a class 2 and 4 Pest Plant which must be suppressed and whose supply is prohibited.

Gorse has been listed as a Weed of National Significance due to its invasiveness, potential for spread and socioeconomic and environmental damage.

Fact sheets are available from the Molonglo Conservation Group website. Visit www.molonglo.org.au or call 62992119 for more information about getting involved in your living environment.

Information used to compile this fact sheet was kindly provided by the Southern Tablelands and South Coast Noxious Plants Committee: www.southeastweeds.org.au

Look-alikes

Native plants can often be confused with weed species. The following information aims to assist you with accurate identification to prevent the loss of our declining natives. If you are unsure what species you are dealing with, take advantage of the identification services on offer from your local weeds officer (either at your local council or the ACT's Parks, Conservation and Lands) before carrying out any controls.

The **native gorse bitter-pea** (*Daviesia ulicifolia*) has tough, sharply pointed leaves which look similar to gorse spines, and yellow and brown flowers. The leaves are shorter than gorse spines. The whole plant is more open branching and smaller than gorse, but it could be mistaken for young gorse plants. The **broom bitter pea** (*Daviesia genistifolia*) is a similar native which could be mistaken for gorse. It too can be differentiated from gorse by the flowers which are a dull orange-red, not pure yellow.

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Native: gorse bitter-pea
A common native shrub

Jackie Miles/Max Campbell



Native: gorse bitter-pea

Control methods

For advice on what time of year to implement the following management options, see the Molonglo Catchment Weed Control Calendar.

Seek advice on chemical application from your Council Weeds Officer or local 'bush friendly' nursery. Always use chemicals as directed on the label.

Prevention is the best option as once established controlling gorse is costly.

Cut and paint or spray. Hand pull or dig smaller plants. Seed is long-lived in the soil and seedling growth after removal of the parent plants will need follow-up. Fire can be used to stimulate germination of soil-stored seed but must be followed by a comprehensive control program or it will just create a greater problem. Consult the Rural Fire Service for permits and advice before using fire as part of your management methods; in urban areas also contact the local council/control authority.

There are a number of biological controls available for gorse including the gorse seed weevil and gorse spider mite, the latter having had a reasonable impact in some areas of NSW. Contact the Molonglo Catchment Coordinator for information on how to access these biological controls.