



# GORSE

(*Ulex europaeus* L.)

**G**orse is a dense, spiny, evergreen legume shrub, which resembles Scotch broom. It grows up to 10 feet tall with erect, angular stems. Spreading branches end in a sharp spine and have stiff spinelike leaves,  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 inches long. The yellow flowers are shaped like those of peas,  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long. Flowers grow in clusters near the ends of branches. Gorse primarily flowers in the early spring, though plants may flower throughout the year depending on their location. The plants produce seed prolifically, and the bursting pods scatter seed for several feet. Animals, machinery,

and water also carry the seed. Seeds have a hard coat and will remain viable in the soil for years. Individual plants grow outward, forming a central area of dry, dead vegetation. The oil in the plant, combined with the dead dry-matter, creates a serious fire hazard. Dormant seed resists destruction by fire and germinates more rapidly following a fire.

Introduced from Europe as an ornamental, gorse adapts to regions of mild winters and sandy or gravelly soils having abundant moisture. In the western United States, it appears from the

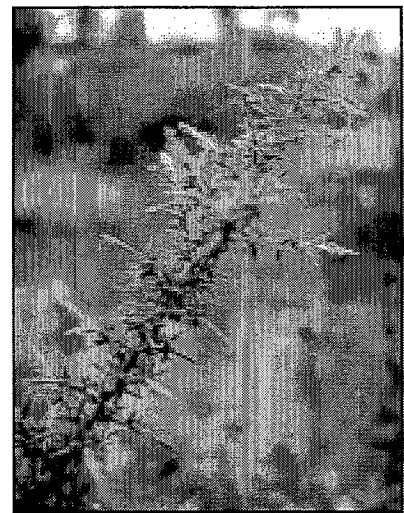
Olympic Peninsula in Washington south through Mendocino County, California. Clackamas and Douglas counties in Oregon report infestation in inland areas. Gorse propagates predominantly by seed and is slow in becoming established. Where gorse adapts it increases rapidly, crowds out other vegetation, and forms dense thickets that render land almost worthless. Few other plants will dominate an area so completely.



*Established gorse plants.*



*Gorse flowers.*



*Stiff spinelike leaves of gorse.*