

“B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant, but may have limited distribution in some counties

Gorse

Ulex europaeus

Other common names: Furze, whin, common gorse

USDA symbol: ULEU

ODA rating: B and T



Introduction: Gorse was introduced from Europe in the 1890's at Bandon as an ornamental and living fence. Worldwide, European settlers brought the plant with them to more than 15 countries or islands where it has escaped causing significant economic harm. Currently Oregon has at least 55,000 acres at some level of infestation.

Distribution in Oregon. Gorse can be found predominantly along the coast in Coos, Curry and Lane Counties. Scattered infestations exist inland and are subjected to periodic treatments to reduce their impact.

Description: Gorse is a perennial, heavily armored evergreen shrub growing from 3 to over 10 feet tall. Gorse plants are shrubby with stout and erect spreading branches covered in terminal thorns frequently forming dense thickets. Clusters of yellow pea-like flowers can be found on the plant throughout the year but peak bloom occurs March through May. Seedpods are hairy 1/2 to 3/4 inch long, and brown when ripe. Mature pods burst, scattering seeds for several feet.

Impacts: Few invasive exotic species persist like gorse, making it one of the most difficult to manage weeds in the world. Plant growth and stand density increase at a rapid rate, crowding out native plants, impacting forest production, invading parklands, pastures, and rendering infested land unusable. Control costs are high and reinfestation is a constant problem. Gorse stands develop a long-lived persistent seed bank requiring long-term commitment to control. High levels of natural oils in the spines make this plant highly flammable and an extreme fire hazard. Gorse roots fix nitrogen enabling it to thrive in low nutrient soils such as sand dunes.

Biological controls: Two biological control agents, *Exapion ulicis*, a seed weevil and *Tetranychus lintearius*, a spider mite, are established in Oregon, however, they have not been effective at controlling gorse.

