



Government
of South Australia

WEED IDENTIFICATION NOTES

ANIMAL AND PLANT CONTROL COMMISSION

CAPE BROOM



Mature shrub



Shoot with flower clusters in leaf axils



Flowers and unripe pods

CAPE BROOM



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Cape broom or Montpellier broom, *Genista monspessulana*, is an evergreen shrub introduced from the Mediterranean as an ornamental garden plant. Cape broom is a highly invasive weed of native vegetation. Because Cape broom is such a prolific seeder it is important to keep it off clean properties and destroy new plants before they become established.

Distribution

Eyre Peninsula	- not known
Northern pastoral	- not known
Northern ag districts / Yorke Peninsula	- not known
Murray Mallee	- not known
South East	- a few small isolated patches in the south
Central region	- scattered patches in higher rainfall areas

Impacts

Cape broom is an invasive species of native vegetation and its dense growth excludes desired plants which reduces biodiversity while harbouring feral animals. It can also encroach into pasture paddocks resulting in lower carrying capacity. It is a major problem in forestry where its thickets increase the fire hazard along the edges of plantations.

Cape broom has been seen as a good hedge or windbreak plant, as trimming of its branches encourages thick foliage.

Recognition

An erect, evergreen shrub to 3m tall which reproduces by seed. There is normally one main stem with many branches which are finely hairy and later become woody. The leaves consist of three leaflets which are hairy on the underside and the middle one is longer than the others, up to 3cm. Flowers are bright yellow, 1.2 cm long and shaped like pea flowers. They occur in dense clusters of 4-8 at the end of short shoots from the leaf axils. The fruit is a flat pod covered with silky hairs, containing 5-8 seeds, and black or brown when ripe. The pod halves coil up after releasing the seeds. Seeds are dark brown to black, rounded, flattened, smooth and shiny, approximately 2mm diameter. Cape broom has a branched taproot with many shallow lateral roots.

Biology

Cape broom grows on a wide range of soils but does best on sandy soils. The long-lived seeds accumulate in the soil and germinate in large numbers after a fire. Other germinations occur mostly in autumn and spring and seedlings grow slowly at first. Plants begin to flower when they are two years old. The main flowering occurs from late winter to spring, with a second flowering at the end of summer. The seed pods burst during spring and summer, ejecting seeds for several metres. New growth is produced in winter and spring.

Cape broom was originally planted as a hedge plant and ornamental shrub. Most spread these days is by seeds moved in soil.

Further Information:

Parsons, W.T. & Cuthbertson, E.G. (2000). *Noxious Weeds of Australia*. 2nd ed. Inkata Press.

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For more advice on recognising and controlling Cape broom, contact your local Animal and Plant Control Board:



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