

SACRAMENTO WEED WARRIORS - How are we removing Spanish Broom?

Sacramento Weed Warriors conducts removal work groups every month. Community volunteers of all ages are participating as environmental stewards. SWW provides the necessary tools and gloves, an orientation, and supervision at each of these events.



Professional work crews have removed large stands of broom on the upper portions of the American River Parkway using heavy equipment and power tools. SWW volunteers are using hand tools, including loppers, weed wrenches, and pruning saws to also remove Spanish broom. Where appropriate, a certified herbicide applicator is applying limited amounts of herbicide to control massive numbers of new seedlings. SWW volunteers will also be controlling French broom.



What can YOU do?

- **Report broom sightings to us**
If you see Spanish broom growing along a waterway, or on private property, in the Sacramento area, contact us. SWW will contact the land owner, or the appropriate government agency, and offer to remove the cluster.
- **Join a Sacramento Weed Warriors work group**
We conduct a community work group on the first Saturday of every month. Spanish broom is one of the top priority invasive species being removed from the American River Parkway and along waterways throughout the Sacramento region. More information about Sacramento Weed Warriors is online at www.sacvalleycnps.org.

How to contact us

For more information, please contact:

Frank Wallace, Project Director
Sacramento Weed Warriors
Tel: (916) 213-4682
Email: frankw2@pacbell.net

Sacramento Weed Warriors (SWW) is a community stewardship initiative of the California Native Plant Society-Sacramento Valley Chapter. Many local organizations, including the American River Parkway Foundation and the Sacramento Urban Creeks Council, provide support. SWW is currently receiving funding to implement the Community Stewardship Component of the American River Parkway-Invasive Plant Management Project (ARP-IPMP). During Phase 1 of this long term project, IPMP professional crews and SWW volunteers are removing 5 invasive plant species located on 653 acres in the Parkway. On a long term basis, SWW will be responsible for monitoring more than 800 acres to be sure that new plants are treated or removed before more seeds are produced.

The American River Parkway-Invasive Plant Management Project is funded by grants from the California Wildlife Conservation Board, California Department of Transportation, and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency. The project is administered by the Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks, Recreation and Open Space. Loran May and Associates is the project manager.



An environmental stewardship project of the California Native Plant Society-Sacramento Valley Chapter

Spanish Broom

(Spartium junceum)



Invasive Weed Fact Sheet

Special thanks to Supriya Mody for the graphic design.



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What is Spanish Broom?

- Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*) is an ever-green shrub that is native to the Mediterranean.
- The shrub typically grows 6-10 feet tall and has erect bright green rounded stems that have only a few leaves on each stem.
- Spanish broom has clusters of bright yellow pea-like flowers that generally blossom from late March to May or June.
- Mature plants produce hundreds of hairy seed pods that are green in summer, becoming dry and brown in the fall.
- French broom (*Genista monspessulana*) is also present on the American River Parkway in scattered locations. It has many of the same characteristics of Spanish broom. However, French broom has a striated (furrowed) stem and many leaves that grow in groups of three.



How does it spread?

- In California, Spanish and French broom spread by seed. When ripe, the seed pods burst open and the seeds are propelled up to 12 feet from the plant.
- Seed production is prodigious; large plants can produce several thousand seeds.
- Seeds are washed from the cobble sand bars and swept downstream where new populations are formed.

Why is it a problem?

- Spanish broom forms dense, woody undergrowth on flat cobble sandbars and riparian banks, displacing native plants that provide food and shelter for wildlife.
- Broom provides poor forage for wildlife, since its leaves and seeds are toxic to most species.
- As the plant matures, the woody stems dry out, creating a fire hazard along waterways.
- Broom can enrich the nitrogen in surrounding soil, which in turn can promote the growth of other non-native plant species.
- Its taproot can reach depths of more than 6 feet enabling it to survive drought conditions. The root system is also difficult to remove.
- Broom plants produce thousands of seeds that can germinate over an extended period of years. It has been reported that new seedlings have appeared after more than 15 years in the soil. Thus, areas with previous infestations must be monitored indefinitely to avoid new reinfestations of mature plants.

Where does it come from?

- Spanish broom is native to the southern Mediterranean region and the Canary Islands.
- It was introduced as a horticultural plant in the San Francisco Bay region in the mid-1900s and even earlier in other parts of California.
- It was brought to California for landscape planting, mine-tailings stabilization, and roadside erosion control.
- Its abundant yellow flowers were used for medicinal purposes and the stems for brooms.