Gorse

Ulex europaeus

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Fabaceae (pea)

Also known as
Furze, whin

Where is it originally from?
Europe

What does it look like?
Sharply spiny shrub (<2-3 m tall) with woody erect or spreading stems which are many-branched in younger plants but become bare at the base as the plant gets older. Leaves are reduced to spines, new leaves less so. Spines are deeply furrowed. Pea-like yellow flowers (13-20 mm long, May-Nov, sometimes all year) are followed by hairy seed pods (13-25 mm long) which turn black when mature and explode to release seeds.

Why is it weedy?
Produces massive numbers of long-lived seeds, matures and grows rapidly, and is versatile about habitat. Tolerates hot to cold temperatures, high to low rainfall, wind, salt, damage and grazing, and all soil types.

Photo: Trevor James

How does it spread?
Explosion of seed pods spreads seed up to 5 m from the parent plant, and seed is also spread by soil movement and road graders, contaminated machinery, animals, boots, stock food and lime. Hedges, roadsides, waste land, farms, quarries, forest tracks, metal dumps, fire breaks, exotic forests, skid sites, and riverbeds are all common seed sources.

What damage does it do?
Forms pure associations temporarily in many habitats, inhibiting the establishment of native plant seedlings. Increased nitrogen in poor soil types changes native species able to grow there. Can be a nursery crop for native species, dying back when overtopped, but less likely on dry sites.

Photo: Trevor James

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
River systems, shrublands, forest margins, coastline, tussockland, fernland, wetland, consolidated sand dunes, gumlands, cliffs, disturbed forest, exotic plantations, poor pasture, and bare land.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Cut and paste - Cut the stem/trunk as close to the ground and cover the entire stump with herbicide as soon as possible after cutting. Apply either glyphosate gel (120g/L strength) OR picloram gel (43g/l strength) to the entire cut stem. When a gel is inadequate apply a commercial formulation of (120g triclopyr/l of oil or product containing triclopyr and picloram 50ml/L water mix). Apply the mixture over the entire exposed surface of the cut stump, i.e. top and sides
2. Basal Spray - Basal spray stems up to 20cm diametre with X-Tree Basal. Apply from the ground to a height 6 times the diameter of the plant, ensure the base is thoroughly covered at ground level.
3. Foliar spray - Apply herbicide using a hand held sprayer/knapsack to plants <1m tall or gun and hose for larger infestations. Use the label recommended adjuvant. Apply either glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient at 20ml/L knapsack, 1L/100L gun and hose) plus organosilicone penetrant (2ml/L), to cover entire plant. Note: Glyphosate overspray will kill other (desirable) plants.
OR Apply Metsulfuron herbicide (600g/kg active ingredient at 0.5g/L knapsack or 20g/100L gun and hose) plus organosilicone penetrant 3ml/L Note: Metsulfuron overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants and has residual activity in the soil which aids in killing below ground parts OR triclopyr herbicide (600g/L active ingredient at a 6ml/L) plus organosilicone penetrant 1ml/L.

OR picloram/triclopyr herbicide (picloram 100g/L and triclopyr 300g/L active ingredient at 6ml/L) plus penetrant to thoroughly wet all parts of plant. Note: Triclopyr and picloram herbicides are ‘grass friendly’ but overspray will kill other (desirable) broadleaf plants. Picloram has residual activity in the soil which may leach and kill other plants. Do not use under and around other (desirable) broadleaf plants.
Note: These herbicides are not for use over or near water bodies or wetlands
4. Biocontrol - For information about biocontrol agents for gorse please visit:
https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/managing-invasive-species/weed-biocontrol/projects-agents/biocontrol-projects/gorse
CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and directions for the purchase, use and storage of the product, are followed and adhered to.

What can I do to stop it coming back?
Stumps resprout quickly. Reseeds profusely, especially after fire, disturbance or non-selective spraying. Do not burn or graze. Only use glyphosate spray when all vegetation on site is to be bared for replanting (generally not recommended). Maintain humus layer. Sites with appropriate tall forest species present can usually be left to be overtopped, can speed by selective slashing, stump swabbing or planting. Maintain roadsides, cuttings and other vectors, check road gravel and fill.