

Delegation: Joanne Sales, Broombusters Invasive Plant Society, re Scotch Broom

Summary: Broombusters began in 2006 in Oceanside, working with MOTI in Coombs and the Town of Qualicum Beach. Twelve years later, municipalities from Campbell River to North Cowichan work with Broombusters each year. In 2018, over 500 volunteers cut broom for over 5000 hours on East Vancouver Island. Why?

Scotch broom is an aggressive, ALIEN invasive plant that:

- Spreads rapidly and densely - anywhere in the sun.
- Forms dense thickets - Crowds out native plants
- Leads to a dramatic loss of diversity
- Slows and prevents forest re-growth
- Highly flammable
- Toxic to grazing animals - Changes soil chemistry.
- Makes farmland useless.

Scotch broom does great harm to our local ecology, forestry, tourism, agriculture, and energy sectors. Broom quickly takes over areas that have been deforested. It spreads quickly onto agricultural land, especially on land owned by speculators and non-farmers.

FIRE DANGER: Of greatest concern is that high oil content of broom and abundant dead branches make broom highly flammable and increases the risk of wildfire. The Coastal Fire Centre and Terry Peters (Fire Chief Powell River) make it very clear:

Scotch broom is a volatile flash fuel that increases a wildfire's fuel load, increases the fire's intensity, and makes wildfires more difficult to predict and control.

Broom has spread without controls under BC Hydro utility corridors. The dangers of having broad yellow avenues of flammable broom stretch across the island cannot be underestimated.

We have photos from New Zealand of broom covered mountains. It can and does happen all over the world – simply by neglect. Scotch broom has been ignored for too long. Once upon a time we didn't know how bad it was – now we do. We want the RDN to be a leader in slowing the spread of this dangerous, noxious woody weed.

Action Requested: Broombusters request that the RDN consider some or all of the following steps.

We request that:

1. The RDN initiate and support efforts being made to control the spread of Scotch broom, including Broombusters, and other groups working in parks, green spaces, and cleared forest land.
2. The RDN implement immediate, clear and effective rules to slow the spread of Scotch broom. These rules should apply especially when forests and farm lands are cleared of trees, whether by forest industries, private forest managers, or private land owners. Ideas: Land should not be cleared until developers are ready to build. There should be fines or consequences for allowing land to be taken over by broom. The bottom line: Broom should no longer be allowed to spread onto any cleared land.
3. The utility corridors should be a fire break. Instead, the extensive coverage of broom on the BC Hydro transmission lines increases the danger of wildfire. The corridors have become an avenue for fire to travel across the island. We ask the RDN to require control of this fire hazard.
4. There should be regulations to prohibit broom from growing on or near all gravel pits, as the transportation of gravel to new locations spreads long living broom seeds.
5. Ineffective techniques of broom control have been used for decades, which have only made the spread of broom worse. Pulling, mowing, and poison do not work – because the spread of broom is caused by the seeds, not the roots. Broombusters has been successful in many areas and would like to have input about removal techniques.