

Gorse

Ulex spp.

Gorse rapidly forms dense impenetrable infestations which severely reduce stock carrying capacity on farms and compete vigorously with young trees in forestry operations. It provides an excellent harbour for pests (rabbits and possums) and dense patches are a considerable fire hazard in summer.



Status

Gorse is a declared plant pest throughout the Auckland Region. It is a Boundary Control Plant Pest and rural land occupiers are required to maintain a minimum of a 10 metre wide strip, free of gorse on boundaries adjacent to land clear of, or being cleared of gorse. (Land occupiers in urban areas have no legal obligation to clear the plant.) Gorse is also banned from sale, propagation, distribution or commercial display.

Origin

A native of Central and Western Europe, it now occurs in most temperate areas of the world. Brought to New Zealand by early British settlers for use as a hedge plant it soon escaped from the original plantings and has now become New Zealand's most widespread weed.

Description

Gorse is an erect, much branched, perennial shrub commonly 1 to 2.5 metres high and 3 metres in diameter. The stems and branchlets are green to brown in colour, woody when mature and are armed with numerous spines up to 5cm long. Bright yellow pea-like flowers (main flowering periods are July - October and March - May) eventually form dark oval pods, 1 to 2cm long, which contain 2 to 6, greenish-brown seeds. Seeds normally germinate in autumn or spring to mid-summer. Early seedling growth is rapid and plants may first flower when 18 months old.



Invasion

Seeds are the only method of spread, however they are relatively large and heavy and do not blow in the wind. The seed pods burst and eject the seeds for a distance of up to 8 metres. Seeds can also be spread by water action, birds and in gravel and soil.

Control

On isolated bushes a hand slasher or mechanical back-pack scrub cutters can be used. Regular rotary slashing with tractor mounted equipment also gives good short term control however all these methods only top the gorse and if not treated with a herbicide regrowth will occur from the cut crown. Large areas of slashed stumps should be left to grow to 0.5 metres in height and then sprayed. Stumps of isolated plants can be treated by mixing 1 part of Tordon Brushkiller with 20 parts water and liberally coating the cut surface of the stems.

There are several chemicals that effectively control gorse, with the most reliable results being obtained when it is sprayed from November to February.

Note: With the majority of the chemicals recommended for controlling gorse, the spray coverage of the plants must be complete to the point of runoff on both leaves and stems. Without total coverage maximum results will not be achieved. Refer to labels for mixing rates. Glyphosate (Roundup G2 or Nufarm) - Apply all year round. Pulse penetrant must be added otherwise poor results will occur.

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- **Trounce** - Can be applied year round.
- **Escort** - Can be applied year round. A wetting agent or penetrant such as Pulse must be added to the spray mix. Escort is slow and brown off can take up to 6 months.
- **Grazon** - Apply from November to February. Gives selective control without damaging grass species.
- **Tordon Brushkiller** - Apply any time of the year. Gives selective control without damaging grass species.

CAUTION: When using any herbicide please read the label thoroughly to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed.

DISCLAIMER: Although this document has been prepared in good faith from a number of sources believed to be reliable, the Auckland Regional Council does not give any warranty that all information contained is accurate or complete or that advice given will be appropriate in all circumstances. The information regarding pesticides does not necessarily appear on the labels of the products concerned, therefore the Auckland Regional Council shall not be liable to anyone in respect of any damages suffered as a result of their reliance on the information contained in this document. Mention of product trade names implies neither endorsement of those products nor criticism of similar products not mentioned.

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