



Gorse and Broom

Description

Gorse is a nasty weed that is all too-present around New Zealand. It is a spiny shrub that grows to 4m in height, with yellow flowers appearing in autumn and spring. It was originally imported from Europe as a hedge row and garden plant and is well established in New Zealand because of its ability to tolerate a wide range of climatic and soil conditions. One bush produces many seeds which can be spread up to 2m by the explosive opening of the hard seed pods and remains viable in the soil for up to 40 years. If left unchecked it rapidly colonises large areas into which livestock are unable to penetrate.

Control

Mechanical Control

Just cutting the top growth does not kill Broom or Gorse. In fact, prolific re-sprouting will result if the stem is cut anywhere above the root. The only effective way to cut down Broom or Gorse is to apply herbicide to the stumps immediately after cutting. For mature plants, clear thick stands or multi-branched plants, tools such as chainsaws, axes, machetes, brush cutters, or loppers can be used. Cut plants near the ground but take care to avoid spreading mature seed pods to un-infested areas.

Dispose of the cuttings by chipping or taking them off site to avoid creating a fire hazard. Large areas of slashed stumps can be left to grow to up to 0.5 meters in height and then sprayed. Any disturbance of the ground will invariably produce a seed bed that will nurture new seedlings. These should be sprayed with herbicide or grazed off. Regular mowing will ultimately reduce the vigor of Broom or Gorse and also encourage competitive species of grasses and broadleaf's to become established.

Control

Chemical spraying

This is best carried out when the plant is actively growing in the spring and autumn months. It becomes more difficult to control from late March onwards as the new spring growth hardens. Common chemicals used include: Escort (Metsulphuron), Roundup (Glyphosate) and Grazon (Triclopyr) and Tordon Brushkiller (Triclopyr and Picloram). The first two have the benefit of being relatively cheap to purchase but will damage pasture, so if you need the grass Grazon or Tordon should be used. The residual nature of these chemicals (time it remains active in the soil) needs to be considered if you are planning on replanting, after the Gorse has been treated.

As the spines have a hairy surface it is important an organo-silicone (penetrant) is also used in association with the above chemicals. This improves the movement of the chemical into the plant improving knockdown effectiveness. It also reduces the time between application and absorption into the plant (rain fastness) which is particularly important in wetter areas or if poor weather is due.

Cutting and stump treating

This is a labour intensive method of control but is effective, particularly in areas of sensitive native vegetation. A water based solution of Tordon Brush Killer is very effective for this method, but only if the cut stump is sprayed immediately to ensure uptake of the chemical. A more convenient method for smaller jobs is the use of Vigilant Gel. This comes in a small bottle with a brush attached which enables the chemical to be brushed on the freshly cut stems.

Conclusion

In all cases ongoing control will be required due to the seed bank in the soil. Make a point of noting in next year's diary to start follow up control about February, and it should get easier each year.

If you have any questions regarding any of the above, don't hesitate to give us a call.