

The next big weed?

Montpellier broom (Canary broom or French broom) *Genista monspessulana*, is a native to the Mediterranean region. It is readily available in nurseries and widely grown as a hardy evergreen shrub of up to 3 m tall. It has yellow pea shaped flowers in spring, produces pods containing 5-8 dark brown to black seeds and can set seed after 2 years.

But, Montpellier broom is another GARDEN THUG that now occurs in large areas of the Jarrah-Marri and smaller areas of Karri forest in south west WA.

Anecdotal evidence east of Manjimup suggests that Montpellier broom has increased over the last 20 years. Some areas are so dense that dieback interpretation is impossible to carry out, as native indicator species can't be seen.

No wonder it's a survivor, soil stored seeds are long lived, and plants can tolerate drought and frost. Seeds are ejected out of exploding pods up to 2m away from the parent plant and are often carried long distances on vehicles and by earth-moving equipment. Once established, Montpellier broom can exclude most other vegetation and competitors by forming dense infestations that increase fire fuel-loads and provide safe habitats for rabbits and foxes.

Small plants of Montpellier broom can be hand pulled or slashed. Larger plants can be cut off and their stumps painted with a suitable herbicide. Basal bark treatment is another option. Soil disturbance and fire usually encourage huge germination of soil-stored seed, which may give opportunities for herbicide application before other vegetation sprouts.

Resist buying this GARDEN THUG and encourage others to do the same. And please advise your local weed group or similar organization if you see Montpellier broom occurring where it doesn't belong. The earlier this weed is controlled the better the results!

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