

The Menace of French Broom: Efforts to Eradicate a Fire Hazard in Marin

French broom (*Genista monspessulana*) is a deceptively beautiful plant that has taken root in Marin County and many other parts of California. With its bright yellow flowers, French broom might seem like a harmless addition to the landscape. However, this invasive species poses significant fire hazards and ecological threats. Understanding the dangers of French broom and the ongoing efforts to eradicate it can help Marin residents contribute to a safer, more resilient community.



Why is French Broom a Fire Hazard?

French broom is notorious for its high flammability. The plant contains oils and resins that ignite easily and burn intensely. It can form dense thickets that provide a continuous fuel source, allowing fires to spread rapidly across the landscape. During the dry season, the risk of ignition increases as the plant's foliage and seed pods dry out, creating an abundance of tinder.

French broom's growth habit exacerbates its fire hazard. It often forms dense, impenetrable stands that can reach up to 10 feet tall. These thickets not only serve as ladder fuels, enabling fire to climb from the ground to the canopy, but they also block access for firefighters and hinder efforts to control and contain wildfires.

Ecological Impacts

Beyond its fire risk, French broom poses significant ecological threats. It is a highly invasive species that outcompetes native plants, reducing biodiversity and altering habitats. French broom fixes nitrogen in the soil, which can change the nutrient composition and further disadvantage native species adapted to low-nitrogen environments. This disruption can have cascading effects on local wildlife, which depend on native plants for food and shelter.

Community Efforts to Eradicate French Broom

Recognizing the dangers posed by French broom, Marin County has launched several initiatives to control and eradicate this invasive species. Community involvement is crucial in these efforts, and various groups and organizations have mobilized to address the issue.

Fire Smart Tip



Volunteer Weed Pulls: Local organizations, such as the Marin County Parks and Open Space District, regularly organize volunteer weed pulls. These events bring together community members to manually remove French broom from public lands. Volunteer efforts are essential, as they supplement the work of professional crews and help cover more ground.

Shaded Fuel Breaks: Marin Wildfire is committed to reducing wildfire fuels by creating Shaded Fuel Breaks. As part of this effort there have been large scale French broom removal projects and work continues to do follow up treatments to keep supporting the eradication of this invasive plant.



Fire Foundry participant pulls French broom in Novato Open Space.

How You Can Help

Marin residents can play a critical role in combating French broom. Here are some steps you can take:

- **Identify and Remove:** Learn to recognize French broom and remove it from your property. Be sure to pull out the entire root system to prevent regrowth.
- **Dispose Properly:** Dispose of French broom properly by placing it in green waste bins or taking it to a designated disposal site. Do not compost it, as seeds can survive and spread.
- **Plant Natives:** Replace French broom with fire-resistant native plants that support local ecosystems. Consult resources from [Marin Master Gardeners](#) for recommendations.
- **Volunteer:** Join local weed pulls and other community efforts to remove French broom from public lands.

French broom is more than just an unsightly weed; it is a serious fire hazard and ecological threat. Through concerted community efforts and proactive management, we can reduce the presence of French broom in Marin County and protect our homes and natural landscapes from wildfire risks. By staying informed and involved, every resident can contribute to making Marin a safer, more resilient place.

For more information on identifying and removing invasive plants, as well as creating fire-resistant landscapes, visit [Fire Safe Marin](#). Together, we can make a difference in safeguarding our community from wildfires.

Stay safe and garden wisely!
Learn more at firesafemarin.org

