

## Scotch broom *Cytisus scoparius*



**E**rect, bushy shrub, 1 to 2.5 m tall, with stems and branches dark green. Leaves alternate, simple or palmately three-foliate; leaflets obovate to elliptic, 0.5 to 1.5 cm long, entire, evergreen or deciduous. Flowers showy, yellow, 1.5 to 2.5 cm long, shaped like a sweet pea; borne in terminal racemes. Pods long ciliate, flattened, broadly linear, 4 to 5 cm long, several seeded. Found mostly in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia; cultivated and sometimes escaping from lawns to roadsides, open woods, and waste areas.

### Toxicity

Poisoning from this shrub is usually of a mild type. Large amounts are required to cause symptoms in animals. Alkaloids have been identified as being the toxic principle. Cytisin, sparteine, and isosparteine are found in the twigs, leaves, and seeds in small amounts. A glycoside, scoparin, has also been isolated. Horses are most susceptible to poisoning by Scotch broom.

### Symptoms

The alkaloid portions cause depression of the nervous system, and the glycoside causes a diuretic effect. Symptoms include incoordination and occasional excitement. Ingestion of large amounts of this shrub can cause coma and death.

### Treatment

Nonspecific. Treat symptoms.