



The Scotch Broom Showdown - Pulling or Cutting?

By Pete Williams

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You've seen them—those bright yellow shrubs lighting up roadsides and hillsides this time of year. They look cheerful enough, but don't be fooled. Yes, we're talking about **Scotch Broom**, and yes, it's time to... *politely but firmly escort them off the premises.*

Most of you already know Scotch Broom is an invasive troublemaker. I won't drag you through the full list of offenses, but let's just say "major fire hazard" sits right at the top. What you may *not* know is that **right now** is the

perfect moment to take action.

The Big Idea: Interrupt the Reproductive Cycle

Those pretty yellow flowers? They're about to turn into seed pods. By August, those pods burst—*dramatically*—launching thousands of seeds into the soil. These seeds can lie in wait for decades, plotting their comeback like tiny botanical villains. If you want any chance of reclaiming your property, you must stop the seed production. The simplest way: **remove the plants before they go to seed.**

Pulling vs. Cutting: The Showdown

Pulling small plants in the wet season is great. Pulling them in the dry season is... well, a workout you didn't ask for. But right now, the most efficient method is **cutting**.

Here's the trick:

- Cut the plant **at or just below ground level**, below the first stem.
- Do that, and they almost never return.
- The drier the weather, the better your odds.
- But don't wait until flowers turn to pods—once the pods pop, the plant has already won this round.



After a decade of doing this, here's my go-to method: Slide your loppers around the base, make one clean cut, and watch even a 6-foot plant topple like a felled giant. It's surprisingly satisfying. On larger plants, you may need to trim a few branches to find the base, but it's still just one decisive cut.

"Why Not Just Pull Them Out?"

You *can* use a weed wrench, but pulling large plants churns up a lot of soil—and disturbed soil encourages more seeds to sprout. Plus, cutting is fast. **You can cut up to ten times as many plants per hour as you can pull.** When you're staring at a sea of Scotch Broom, efficiency matters.

Common Myths About Scotch Broom

- **“You can’t beat them.”** Actually, you can. It just takes persistence.
- **“Pulling is the only real solution.”** Cutting works beautifully when done correctly.
- **“If you cut them in the wet season, they’ll grow back.”** Sometimes, yes—but timing and technique make all the difference.

Think Long-Term: Victory Is Slow, But Real

Once you remove the big plants and stop new seeds from forming, you’re on the road to success. Each year, fewer seeds sprout. Yes, some seeds can survive for decades, but not all of them do.

On my five acres, it’s been six years since the last seed pod dropped its misery. I still get sprouts, but far fewer than before. In winter, I walk the property and pull the little ones—it’s practically meditative. Contact me if you want to talk or get some advice. I offer onsite coaching for those looking to get rid of Scotch broom.

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