


Species Account

	
	Scientific Name: <i>Genista monspessulana</i>
	Family: Fabaceae
	Common Name: French Broom
	Location: Near the stream crossings at WVC
	Date: 12-9-08
Student Name:	

Physical Description

French Broom is a woody shrub that can grow up to 2.5m tall. The leaves are evergreen and are 1-2cm long with three oval leaflets. The flowers of the plant are bright yellow usually clumping 3-9 flowers together on each branch. It is also a legume so it produces seed pods. These pods are very unique with their ability to disperse seeds. Water or animals can easily transport the seeds, but also the pods have the ability to burst open on their own, spreading the seeds around the plant. This plant can only produce seeds once it has reached a height of 40cm, at that point it's seed count can reach 10,000 seeds per season. Where you see one plant there will usually be more close by.

Habitat

French Broom can be found in a variety of habitats within California. The most popular habitats to find it in are: meadows, pastures, fields, forests, and riparian areas. French Broom is also a pioneer species meaning it is usually one of the first plants to start growth in a new area. This plant really thrives in open areas with a lot of sunlight. Most of the time the soil is very hard and dry, but their roots are anchored firmly into the ground.

Ecology

French Broom is non-native and invasive to California; it is often referred to as a noxious

weed. Even though it is not native here it grows extremely well in California's habitat. This has a huge impact on the native plants that are now struggling to survive. French Broom form dense thickets very quickly, this results in the crowding out of native plants and the shading out of tree saplings. Not only are they harmful to the native plants, but they impact their surrounding community. They having a tendency to catch fire and burn really hot, which can get out of hand very fast. Also their leaves and seeds contain a chemical called, Alkaloids; this makes French Broom highly toxic to domestic animals such as horses and cattle. Overall this is a very harmful plant to have in California; it is also very difficult to remove completely even in small areas.

References:

Image: Self

Text: California Invasive Plant Council

<http://www.cal-ipc.org/ip/management/ipcw/pages/detailreport.cfm@usernumber=52&surveynumber=182.php>