

BROOM SNAKEWEED

Gutierrezia sarothrae Pursh
Plant Symbol = GUSA2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center



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Alternate Names
snakeweed

Uses

Ethnobotanic: Broom snakeweed was used by numerous Native American tribes for a variety of reasons. The Blackfoot use the roots of broom snakeweed in an herbal steam as a treatment for respiratory ailments. The Dakota use a concentrate made from the flowers as a laxative for horses. The Lakota took a decoction of the plant to treat colds, coughs, and dizziness. The Navajo and Ramah Navaho rubbed the ashes of broom snakeweed on their bodies to treat headaches and dizziness. They also chewed the plant and applied it to wounds, snakebites, and areas swollen by insect bites and stings. The Comanche used the stems of broom snakeweed to make brooms for sweeping their residences.

Wildlife:

Broom snakeweed is utilized by some large ungulates including mule deer and pronghorn antelope. Broom snakeweed can comprise up to 28% of the pronghorn diet.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Weediness

This plant may become weedy or invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. Please consult with your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative Extension Service office, or state natural resource or agriculture department regarding its status and use. Weed information is also available from the PLANTS Web site at plants.usda.gov.

Description

General: Sunflower Family (Asteraceae). Broom snakeweed is a perennial subshrub that ranges from 2 to 10 dm in height. It is native to the U.S. The stems are bushy and branch upwards from the woody base. The non-woody stems range from smooth to having some short hairs. The stems may be resinous and therefore sticky when touched. The leaves are alternate and range from linear to linear and threadlike in shape. The leaves are from 5 to 60 mm long and 1 to 3 mm wide. Dense clusters of flowers form at the ends of the stems. There are 3 to 8 ray florets per cluster and 2 to 6 disk florets per cluster. The flattened part of the ray corolla or ligule is yellow in color and 1 to 3 mm long. The whorl of bracts that is found at the base of the flower cluster is 3 to 6 mm tall and 2 mm across. The bracts are narrow and green in color at the apex and along the midnerve. The achenes have a modified calyx consisting of 8 to 10 acute scales. The acute scales of the ray achenes are about one-half as long as those of the disk achenes.

Distribution: For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Adaptation

Broom snakeweed is found in open, dry plains and upland sites. Broom snakeweed is killed by fire. Re-establishment occurs via wind dispersed seeds. Broom snakeweed densities usually increase following fire, if the seeds in the seed bank are left undamaged by heat.

Establishment

Broom snakeweed flowers are pollinated by various insects. Regeneration occurs primarily through wind dispersed seeds. Most germination and seedling establishment occurs during the winter and spring. Broom snakeweed seeds are dormant at maturity and require a 4 to 6 month after-ripening period prior to germination. The most successful germination occurs between 59 to 86 °F, at or near soil surface. Broom snakeweed prefers full sun, well-drained soil, and low moisture.

Pests and Potential Problems

Grown in its native habitat and using local seed stock, broom snakeweed should not be prone to debilitating pests.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

These materials are readily available from commercial plant sources. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government." The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

Control

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA, NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control methods named, and other products may be equally effective.

References

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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