

# *Cytisus scoparius* (L.) Link

**Standardized Common Name:** Scotch Broom

**Other Common Names:** Broom, Irish Tops, Scoparium

**Family:** Fabaceae (Leguminosae)

**Taxonomy:** *Cytisus* includes about 30 species of Old World, mostly Eurasian shrubs. *Cytisus scoparius* belongs to Sect. *Sarothamnus*. It is native to Europe and is naturalized in the United States. The basionym is *Spartium scoparium* L.; other synonyms include *Genista scoparia* Lam. and *Sarothamnus scoparius* (L.) Wimmer ex W. D. J. Koch. Several subspecies may be recognized, most of which were initially described as species of limited range; the distinctions among these are not considered important in commerce.

**Description:** Shrub, to 2 m high; stems much-branched, erect to procumbent, 5-angled. Leaves alternate, trifoliolate and petiolate or unifoliolate (reduced to 1 leaflet) and sessile especially on younger stems, or almost all unifoliolate in subsp. *reverchonii*; leaflets 6–20 mm long, 1.5–9 mm broad, elliptic-oblong to obovate, apices subacute, margins entire; surfaces pubescent or glabrous, lower surface usually pubescent. Inflorescences racemose; flowers solitary or paired, pedicellate. Calyx campanulate, bilabiate, upper lip with 2 teeth, lower lip with 3, glabrous. Corolla yellow, bilaterally symmetrical; standard petal 15–20 mm long, rounded, with short claw; wings oblong; keel curved, blunt, short-beaked. Stamens 10, 5 longer, 5 shorter, all filaments attached. Gynoecium unicarpellate; style convoluted after flowering, ciliate on lower part. Fruit a legume, 25–40(–70) mm long, flattened, oblong, black, pubescent on margins; seeds 12–18.

**Parts in Commerce:** Tops harvested at time of flowering, consisting of green twigs

## Identification:

- Twigs straight, branching, tough, flexible, 2–3 mm in diameter
- With 5 very prominent longitudinal ribs, almost star-shaped in cross-section; ribs not T-shaped in cross-section
- Epidermis dark green, sometimes with reddish-brown cork patches
- Hairless or with soft hairs; apex hairy
- Fracture fibrous, or tough and splintery in larger stems; fractured surfaces yellowish
- In cross-section, contains narrow cortex and pericycle, xylem in unbroken ring, and large pith; thick-walled fibers concentrated around vascular cylinder and in ribs
- Taste bitter and unpleasant

**Adulterants:** *C. scoparius* can be confused with the closely related, yellow-flowered legume *Genista tinctoria* L. (Dyer's Broom, also used in folk medicine). The stems of the latter are not star-shaped in cross-section. Youngken also reported the completely unrelated *Osyris alba* L. as an adulterant; it has numerous longitudinal striations, and the wood is white.

## References:

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Wichtl M, ed. *Herbal Drugs and Phytopharmaceuticals*, 3<sup>rd</sup> English ed. Stuttgart: medpharm Scientific Publishers and Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press; 2004:555–557.

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