

The Worst Weeds in Santa Cruz County

Invasive plants are one of the biggest threats to the natural areas that make Santa Cruz County unique. The key to controlling the spread of invasives is early detection and treatment. Use this guide to help you identify nonnative plants in your area.

TREES

- **Black Locust**
(*Robinia pseudoacacia*)
Grows along roadsides, on canyon slopes or streambanks. Look for thorns and leaves on both sides of stem.



- **Blue Gum Eucalyptus**
(*Eucalyptus globulus*)
Grows in wet or dry locations. Look for unique seed pods, long slender leaves, peeling bark and distinctive fragrance.



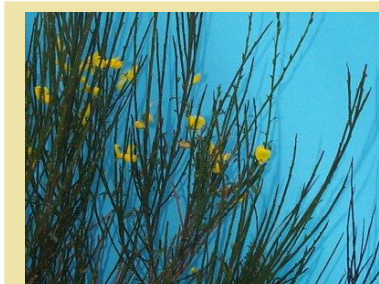
- **Acacia, all species**
(*Acacia spp.*)
Grow along roadsides and in disturbed areas. Look for distinctive leaves (image to right), large seed pods and bright yellow flowers in early spring.



Another invasive tree: Tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

SHRUBS

- **French Broom**
(*Genista monspessulana*)
Common in disturbed areas; spreads quickly, grows in groups large and small. Look for lobed leaves in groups of three and bright yellow flowers in the spring. Has hairy stems, leaves and seed pods.
- **Scotch Broom**
(*Cytisus scoparius*)
Common in disturbed areas; more bushy than French Broom with large, yellow flowers in spring and stems with small, sparse leaves.



Other invasive brooms found in the area include:

- Portuguese Broom (*Cytisus striatus*)
- Spanish Broom (*Spartium junceum*)

LARGE GRASSES

- **Giant Reed**
(*Arundo donax*)
Grows in moist places and stream ditches. This is a giant grass, look for leaves that encircle the stem and jut out at an angle.



- **Pampas Grass**
(*Cortaderia jubata* and *C. selloana*)
Grows on disturbed soils, especially on coastal road cuts but also grows inland in wet and dry areas. Look for large, feathery plumes.



VINES

- **Periwinkle (*Vinca major*)**

Common in riparian areas. Look for purple flowers and smooth, dark green leaves. Stems contain a milky latex. New plants can establish from stem fragments.

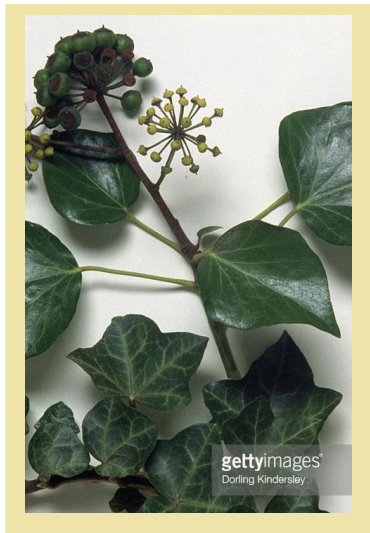


- **Cape Ivy (*Delairea odorata*)**

Grows in dense mats and kills trees and shrubs underneath. Toxic to animals and fish. Look for yellow flowers in the winter months. New plants can establish from stem fragments.

- **English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) & Algerian Ivy (*Hedera canariensis*)**

Both of these species are evergreen woody vines. They crowd out understory species quickly, often form dense monocultures and can establish from stem fragments. Leaf shape may vary.



- **Himalayan Blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*)**

Rapidly displaces natives. Robust vine/shrub. Look for large thorns and leaves in groups of 3 or 5.



Other invasive vines:

- Hedge Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*)
- Garden Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)

GROUNDCOVERS & HERBACEOUS PLANTS

- **Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)**



Mostly grows in moist, disturbed areas, often along roadsides. Toxic to humans and animals. Look for red dots on stems.

- **Iceplant (*Carpobrotus edulis*)**

Succulent that forms dense mats most usually in coastal habitats. Flowers vary in color from pink to white to yellow.



- **Italian Thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*)**

Grows in dense patches, found in open, disturbed sites, along roadsides, and in pastures.



- **Croftonweed (*Ageratina adenophora*)**

Found in disturbed, coastal canyons and riparian areas. Produces abundant seed that is dispersed via wind, water, soil movement and animals. Look for diamond-shaped leaves and small, white flower clusters. Poisonous to livestock.



Other invasive ground covers and herbaceous plants:

- Stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*)
- Bull Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)
- Small leaf spiderwort (*Tradescantia fluminensis*)
- Forget-me-not (*Myosotis latifolia*)
- Harding Grass (*Phalaris aquatic*)