

## The Burning Question: Will Fire Destroy Gorse?

### Gorse a Hardy Survivor

#### **Burning gorse is no guarantee of its elimination.**

Gorse is highly flammable, and like any combustible plant should be controlled to avoid potential risk and damage to buildings, property and valuable vegetation, such as native bush, pasture and crops.

Burning won't eliminate gorse. Fire stimulates seed germination and rarely destroys root systems. Seedlings emerging after fire should be sprayed the following year to control the new growth. If left untreated a whole new patch of gorse will begin its relentless spread.

So, before burning gorse infestations assess whether fire is an appropriate control measure.



### Outcomes to Consider

Fire alone is not the answer to gorse control. The following table shows some benefits and disadvantages of burning.

Fire can be useful in the following circumstances	Disadvantages of Burning Gorse
✓ To reduce impenetrable gorse thickets to allow access for follow up herbicide spraying of regrowth in the following season.	× Burning gorse does not always reduce it to ground level, and often leaves charred gorse stems standing which becomes very hard. Stumps can puncture tyres (even tractor tyres!). Many spray contractors refuse to enter areas previously burnt.
✓ To stimulate seed germination, therefore reducing the seed bank. Spraying these seedlings the following year is required to control regrowth.	× Increased seed germination often leads to a worse gorse problem than initially started with unless control work is undertaken.
✓ Sheep or goat grazing on new growth after fire can be an effective chemical-free control method.	× Gorse will regrow with multiple stems, making control more difficult.
✓ To conduct controlled hazard reduction burns to reduce fuel loads near valuable assets.	× Gorse burns at a very high temperature and can be difficult to control. Losses to property with damage to native vegetation are often associated with gorse fires.

### When Not to Burn Gorse.

**Don't** burn gorse near bushland, fences, houses, powerlines

**Don't** forget to check whether you need a fire permit.

**Don't** burn gorse on days of total fire bans.

**Don't** burn gorse soon after spraying. Some herbicides take many months to be fully effective, burning will destroy the effect of herbicides if the plant is not dead (even if it looks dead) – your efforts and costs in spraying will be wasted. Wait at least six months.

### Fire burns more than just Gorse

Fire also destroys much of the grass and other valuable vegetation that grows amongst gorse. The destruction of grass, native plants and seedlings reduces the competition for gorse seeds.

### Plan to Replant after the Fire

Plan to either replant native vegetation or resow pasture to create competition for gorse seeds and make use of the land now available. If you don't, the gorse will probably come back thicker and more vigorous than before.

### Remember, don't let weeds grow

### Always follow up your weed control efforts

#### Further information:

Weeds of National Significance Project  
Greening Australia (Tasmania)  
GPO Box 9868  
Hobart TAS 7001

[general@tas.greeningaustralia.org.au](mailto:general@tas.greeningaustralia.org.au) or [www.greeningaustralia.org.au](http://www.greeningaustralia.org.au)

Regional Weed Management Officers  
Department of Primary Industries, Water & Environment  
Phone 1300 368 550

[www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/pests](http://www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/pests)

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