

Gorse

Ulex europaeus

Plants · In flower all year · peaks Mar-May



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A dense, viciously spiny evergreen shrub whose leaves are reduced to hard green spines, covered in coconut-scented golden-yellow pea flowers. Gorse — whin, locally — is abundant on heath, rough grazing, railway banks and the Solway coast, and can be found carrying at least some flower in any month of the year, with a mass flowering in spring.

BEHAVIOUR

Ripe seed pods split explosively on hot days with an audible crack, flinging seed several metres. Gorse fixes nitrogen through root nodules and thrives on poor acid soils. The thickets are superb cover: stonechats, linnets and whitethroats nest in them, and the spring flowering is a major nectar source. Old stands burn fiercely and regenerate quickly afterwards.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Peas (Fabaceae)
HEIGHT	Up to 2.5 m
STATUS	Native; abundant on heath and rough ground

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