



## Broom Snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*)

Although broom snakeweed is vibrant in color and looks edible, it is poisonous and potentially deadly to livestock if consumed in large quantities. A chemical called saponin is found in broom snakeweed and it is the primary cause of illness and death when eaten. Saponin produces soap-like suds when added to water solutions. Young plants and those grown in sand are known to be more toxic.

**Description:** Broom snakeweed grows up to 28 inches tall and displays 3 to 8 yellow ray and disc flowers. These plants tend to grow low to the ground and typically mature to the same size as nearby boom snakeweed plants. Flowering occurs between August and October. Lifespan of the shrub may reach up to 20 years. Seeds are brown and hairy. Stems are green to brown, while the trunk is brown.

**Location:** Broom snakeweed flourishes in dry areas of the western United States. It is typically found between western Texas throughout New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, Utah, southern Idaho, Wyoming and California. Large quantities may indicate overgrazing, wildfires or other land disruptions.

**Uses:** The name broom snakeweed derives from the shrub historically being used as a broom sweep. Parts of the plant were used for indigestion along with bee and wasp stings.

Sheep may browse broom snakeweed when food resources are scarce during winter months. Animals only tolerate consuming small amounts.

### Sources:

“Flora Fact: Snakeweed.” *Texas Parks and Wildlife*. Oct. 2008. <https://tpwmagazine.com/archive/2008/oct/scout2/>

“Guide to Poisonous Plants.” *Colorado State University*. 18 Dec. 2018. [https://csuvth.colostate.edu/poisonous\\_plants/Plants/Details/48](https://csuvth.colostate.edu/poisonous_plants/Plants/Details/48)

“Broom and Threadleaf Snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarathrae*, *G. microcephala*)” *USDA Poisonous Plant Research: Logan, UT*. 18 Dec. 2018. <https://www.ars.usda.gov/pacific-west-area/logan-ut/poisonous-plant-research/docs/broom-and-threadleaf-snakeweed-gutierrezia-sarothrae-g-microcephala/>

“Broom and Threadleaf Snakeweed.” *Poisonous Plant Research: Logan, UT*. 21 Dec. 2018. <https://www.ars.usda.gov/pacific-west-area/logan-ut/poisonous-plant-research/docs/broom-and-threadleaf-snakeweed-gutierrezia-sarothrae-g-microcephala/>

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