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OTHER COMMON NAMES: Golden starthistle, yellow cockspur, St. Barnaby's thistle

DESCRIPTION

Yellow starthistle is a winter annual (occasional biennial) that grows to a height of 1 meter, sometimes 2 meters. The plant stem is erect and rigid, bears many branches and is covered with white cottony hair. Its foliage is grey to bluish-green, and its basal leaves are deeply lobed, while its upper stem leaves are almost linear or narrowly oblong. The leaf bases extend down the stems (**decurrent**) giving the stem a winged appearance. It generally flowers May through December, but in Oregon, it flowers only July through August. The flower heads are yellow, located singly at the ends of branches, and are armed with thorns up to ¼ inch long.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- Yellow flower heads and long, sharp spines
- Light-green colored foliage with white cottony hairs on stems and leaves
- Deeply lobed basal leaves and narrowly oblong stem leaves.

WHEN TO FIND YELLOW STARTHISTLE

Yellow starthistle is most easily found when flower from July through August.

WHERE TO FIND YELLOW STARTHISTLE

It grows wherever cheatgrass grows, as well as in canyon grasslands, rangelands, pastures, edges of cropland, open woodlands, roadsides and disturbed areas.

WHAT TO DO

Hand pulling is appropriate if there is a small population and you are certain of its identification. If flowers are present, bag and remove pulled plants.

Yellow Starthistle

Centaurea solstitialis

Yellow starthistle is a native of the Mediterranean region and was introduced to California in 1850. It is capable of surviving in a wide range of habitats, and is now spread throughout California, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, and is considered one of the most serious rangeland weeds in the Northwest.

Yellow starthistle reproduces by seed, which germinate in fall. The plant exists as a basal rosette through the winter and spring until flowering stems develop in late spring and early summer. Seeds are dispersed by wind, human activities (such as vehicles, road maintenance, and contaminated crop seed or hay), birds (which feed on the seeds), livestock, water, and soil movement.

As an aggressive and adaptable weed, yellow starthistle poses a great threat to native plant communities and wildlife. It depletes soil moisture in grasslands, reduces land value of recreational areas, and displaces native plants, decreasing wildlife forage and, thus, native plant and animal diversity. In the Agate Desert Preserve in southwest Oregon, it is threatening *Lomatium cookii*, a globally rare plant species. Effective control of yellow starthistle requires the suppression of seed production and an integrated approach using several control methods.

REFERENCES

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Rosette. Dan Sharratt, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture