



Ada County Pest of the Month

December
2014

**A quick guide to identifying and controlling
invasive plants and animals found in the county**

Purple Starthistle

Iberian Starthistle

Purple Starthistle & Iberian Starthistle are the newest members to the Idaho State Noxious Weed List.



Purple starthistle is an annual to perennial thistle with a mounding growth habit and heads of purple flowers surrounded by long, sharp-pointed spines. Mature plants are one to four feet high, densely and rigidly branched, and have numerous flowerheads.

Purple starthistle has stiff, sharp spines and its bitter taste discourages feeding by cattle, deer, and rodents. It replaces palatable species in some grazed areas, and dense stands of mature plants can make areas inaccessible to livestock and humans. Its spines are thicker and stronger than those of yellow starthistle and do not fall from the plants in autumn as do those of yellow starthistle. Because of this, forage that may grow in infested areas during fall and winter may be inaccessible to grazers.



Iberian starthistle is native to the Mediterranean region, southern Europe and northern Africa. Seedlings will sprout in the fall or early spring forming spiny rosettes in May and June. Blooming continues from midsummer through fall as the plant grows one to six feet tall.

Closely resembling Purple starthistle, both invasive species have the ability to adapt to a variety of climate conditions. They are very competitive along roadsides and low-rainfall rangeland, as well as in higher rainfall pastures, where they displace valuable forage. Sharp spines deter grazing animals or wildlife movement and their access to forage. The potential negative impact on agriculture, wildlife and recreation is significant.

How to Control:

Cultural Control



Purple starthistle

Grubbing or digging can control small infestations. Plants should be cut at least two inches below the soil surface early in the growing season. They are easiest to see after they have begun to bolt, but they should be cut before they begin to flower in order to prevent the release of viable seed. If plants are cut after they have begun to flower, they should be removed from the site and destroyed. Follow-up treatments will be necessary as field tests indicated that 10-15 percent of plants cut below the root crown resprouted.

Mowing is not an effective method of control. The rosettes are too low to be cut and plants that have already bolted often respond to mowing by producing multiple rosettes. Mowing plants that have begun to flower will spread the cut flowerheads, which may still be capable of dropping mature seed.

Chemical Control

Herbicides are most effective when applied in the spring. This is when the plants are in the sensitive seedling or rosette stage, are actively growing, and when soil moisture is high.

Glyphosate, 2,4-D, dicamba, and picloram are effective, but are sometimes only a temporary control. A single application of any of these herbicides will probably not eradicate the weed, particularly in widespread infestations, therefore repeated applications are recommended. A full application of clopyralid may also be effective. Eradicating Purple starthistle and Iberian starthistle will not be achieved through any single management method. A combination of several management techniques is recommended based upon the infestation level and environmental conditions.



Iberian starthistle

Note: Chemical control of any weed can be difficult and confusing. If you are not experienced in chemical control or do not understand the product label, you should consult a licensed applicator to assist you. Inappropriate application can kill desirable vegetation, and may violate federal law.



For questions or concerns, please contact:

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