



February 2014

Ada County Pest of the Month

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

YELLOW STARThISTLE



Yellow Starthistle is a gray-green to blue-green annual. It grows to an average height is two to three feet tall. It has rigid branching and winged stems covered with a fine cottony hairs.

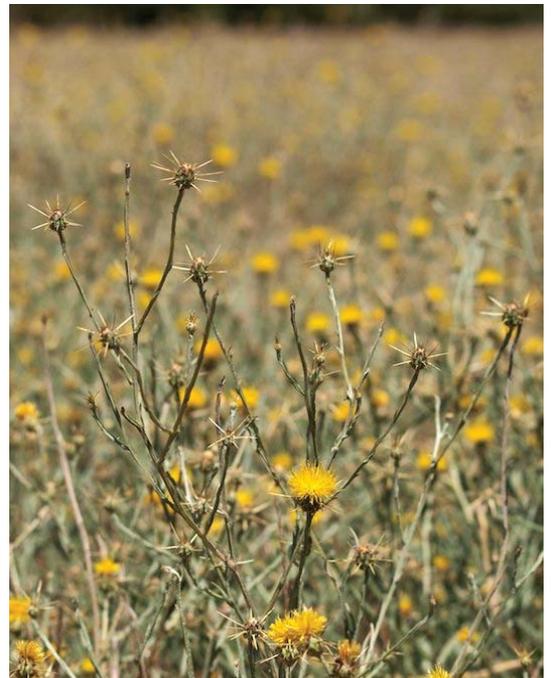
The basal rosette leaves have deeply lobed margins with pointed tips. Stems have a “winged ridge” along their length and bright yellow flower heads that have no distinct center.

The primary identification trait of this weed are the one to two inch long yellow spines sticking out from just beneath the flower.

It's taproot can extend 6 feet deep and the seeds remain viable for 10 to 12 years!

Quick Facts:

- Name: Yellow Starthistle (*centaurea solstitialis*) part of the sunflower family, also known as Barnaby's Thistle.
- Found: Canyon grasslands, cultivated fields, roadsides, rangelands, pastures, fence lines and disturbed areas.
- Briefly: Native to the Mediterranean region. Yellow Starthistle is an invasive competitor that overwhelms the native perennial grasses, throughout much of the western United States.
- It forms dense infestations and rapidly depletes soil moisture, that prevents the establishment of other species.
- Poisonous to horses, causing a nervous disorder called “chewing disease” (nigropallidal encephalomalacia), which is fatal once symptoms develop.
- Seed output can be as high at 30,000 seeds per square meter.



How to Control:

Control of yellow starthistle cannot be accomplished with a single treatment or in a single year. Effective management requires control of the current population and suppression of seed production, combined with establishment of competitive, desirable vegetation.

Cultural Control

Mowing can be used to manage yellow starthistle, provided it is well timed and used on plants with a high branching pattern. mowing is most effective when soil moisture is low and no irrigation or rainfall follows mowing.

Grazing is effective in reducing yellow starthistle seed production. Sheep, goats, or cattle eat yellow starthistle before spines form on the plant.

Burning is best performed at the end of the rainy season when flowers first appear. Yellow starthistle should be green at this time and will require desiccated vegetation to burn.

Chemical Control

Both postemergent and preemergent herbicides are available to control yellow starthistle. Postemergent herbicide treatments generally work best on seedlings. Preemergent herbicides must be applied before seeds germinate to be effective.

Aminopyralid and clopyralid are growth regulator herbicides for use in noncrop areas, including rangeland and pastures. Unlike other growth regulator herbicides, these are effective on yellow starthistle both postemergence and preemergence.

2,4-D can provide acceptable control of yellow starthistle if it is applied at the proper rate and time. Treatment in the rosette growth stage provides better control than later applications.

Dicamba is very effective at controlling yellow starthistle at rates as low as 0.25 lb active ingredient/acre when yellow starthistle rosettes are small, about 1 to 1.5 inches across.

Triclopyr at 0.5 lb active ingredient/acre provides complete control of yellow starthistle seedlings but is not as effective on larger plants. More mature plants require rates up to 1.5 lb active ingredient/acre.

Glyphosate (Roundup) controls yellow starthistle at 1 lb. active ingredient/acre. Good coverage, clean water, and actively growing yellow starthistle plants are all essential for adequate control. Unlike growth regulator herbicides, glyphosate is nonselective and kills most plants, including grasses.

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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