



ISLAND COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED PROGRAM WEED ALERT

Centaurea solstitialis **Yellow Starthistle** Aster Family

Class B Noxious Weed: Control Required

Identification Tips

- Winter annual with yellow thistle-like flowers
- Leaves are grayish-green; lower leaves are deeply lobed, upper leaves are smaller and pointed
- Winged stems and leaves are dull green and covered with woolly hairs
- Bracts are modified into sharp spines up to 1" long
- Prefer full sun and deep, well-drained soils
- Deep taproots

Biology

- Flowers mid-July to August
- Reproduces by abundant seed production
- Plants may grow in dense patches or individually

Impacts

- Sharp spines make this plant undesirable to livestock. Cattle feeding on it may be poorly nourished and can be injured by the spiny heads.
- Outcompetes desirable forage species
- An aggressive species that has invaded millions of acres of rangelands in the western United States.

Distribution

- Yellow Starthistle is found in rangeland, edges of cropland, abandoned farmlands and pastures. While not known to exist in Island County, it is a serious problem in eastern Washington, where it degrades pastures and rangelands.



Yellow Starthistle flower.



Yellow Starthistle plants can form monocultures and severely degrade pasture lands.

Questions?

Call the Island County Noxious Weed Control Board: 360-678-7992
<http://county.wsu.edu/island/nrs/noxious>

What You Can Do

Because Yellow Starthistle is a regulated Class B weed in Island County, property owners are required to control it on their property.

Control Methods

Good pasture management can help prevent or limit initial infestations. Plants need to be managed to prevent further seed production, to deplete the seedbank and to promote desirable plants species in place of the Yellow Starthistle. Combinations of control techniques may be most successful when trying to eradicate Yellow Starthistle. For best results, control methods should be adaptive and employed over several growing seasons.

Manual:

Hand pull the stems that are close to the ground and pull or dig up roots, taking care not to break them apart. Even a small root or stem fragment left behind can re-sprout. For larger, more mature stands, dig out with a shovel or spade.

Mechanical:

Mechanical removal is not economically feasible for large, dense infestations. Small infestations may be hand-pulled, tilled or mowed. Areas should be monitored and controlled frequently during the growing season. Properly timed grazing may control Yellow Starthistle populations but will not eliminate them.



Biological Control:

There are a number of biological agents used on Yellow Starthistle. The Yellow Starthistle hairy weevil, *Eustenopus villosus*, larvae and adults interfere with the seed production of Yellow Starthistle. The adults feed on young seed heads and the larvae feed inside flowerheads. The Yellow Starthistle flower weevil, *Larinus curtus*, larvae feed on developing Yellow Starthistle seed heads. The Yellow Starthistle bud weevil, *Bangasternus orientalis*, larvae feed within seed heads and reduce seed production. The Yellow Starthistle peacock fly, *Chaetorellia australis*, larvae feed within seed heads. The Yellow Starthistle rust, *Puccinia jaceae* var. *solstitialis*, is a fungus that attacks yellow starthistle. The Yellow Starthistle gall fly, *Urophora sirunaseva*, larvae are associated with galls formed within seed heads. For more information about these biological control agents of Yellow Starthistle, please visit [WSU Extension Integrated Weed Control Project](#).