



# YELLOW STARThISTLE

*(Centaurea solstitialis)*

**WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?** Yellow starthistle is a winter annual. Its seeds germinate in the fall, overwinter as a rosette, continue to grow in the spring, and then die before winter. It can grow from 1 to 4 feet tall depending upon growing conditions. The more rainfall, the taller the plants will grow and the more seeds they will produce. In May and June the flower stalk begins to form. Flower heads are yellow with cream colored thorns, one-quarter to three-quarter inches long, sticking out from the flowering heads.

**WHERE DOES IT LIKE TO GROW?** It grows well on dry sites in rangeland, roadsides, and waste areas.

**WHEN DOES IT BLOOM?** Mid July to early August bright yellow flowers appear. Plants begin to dry in August and become easily identifiable skeletons that are silvery gray with a white cottony flower head.

**HOW DOES IT SPREAD?** Yellow starthistle produces two types of seeds: plumed and plumeless. The plumed seeds are caught and spread by the wind. The plumeless seeds drop to the ground once the seed head starts to fall apart.

**HOW DO I CONTROL IT?** As with all annual weeds, keeping them from going to seed is the best control.



## NON-CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- Small infestations can be controlled by hoeing or hand pulling.
- Frequent cultivation is an excellent means of removing young plants.
- Proper grazing management will limit yellow starthistle invasions.
- Horses must not graze in pastures with yellow starthistle. If eaten in large quantities, horses will develop a fatal nervous disease called “chewing disease”. This plant is not toxic to sheep, goats or cattle.
- Six bio-control agents, three beetles and three flies, have been released in heavily infested areas of Washington and Idaho.



## CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- See the reverse side for recommendations on chemical control options, also see our Chemical Treatments handout for more information on using herbicides.

Want more information? Contact:

**Kootenai County Noxious Weed Control**  
**10905 N. Ramsey Road**  
**Hayden, ID 83835**  
**208-446-1290**  
**kcnoxiousweeds@kcgov.us or [www.kcweeds.com](http://www.kcweeds.com)**

*Kootenai County does not discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of disability in the admission or access to, or treatment in, its public meetings, programs, or activities. Requests for assistance or accommodations can be arranged by contacting the Noxious Weed Control Department at (208) 446-1290 or County Administration Office TTY (208)446-2145 with 3 days advance notice.*

# How to Control Yellow Starthistle

Yellow Starthistle is an annual that reproduces by seed only. Control is accomplished by preventing seed production.

**Mechanical** Hand pulling, mowing, tillage, cultivation timed to prevent seed production and repeated for 3-4 years can effectively control Yellow Starthistle. Mowing can also work with careful timing. Mow when 2-5% of the seed heads begin to bloom.

**Cultural** The best long term weed control is to get your desirable native plants thriving. Killing weeds is only one step, you have to also replace them with something good. Seed and fertilize so your grass can take nutrients away from the weeds and not leave available open soil for new weeds to germinate.

**Biological** There are 6 biocontrol insects that have been used for control of Yellow Starthistle. Contact Nezpercie Biocontrol Center for more information. [www.nezpercebiocontrol.com](http://www.nezpercebiocontrol.com)

**Chemical** *\*See our Chemical Treatment handout for more information on using herbicides.*

- **Aminopyralid** is the active ingredient in herbicide products such as **Milestone**. It is broadleaf selective (safe on grass) and can be effective on Yellow Starthistle if applied from the seedling to rosette stage.
- **Clopyralid** is the active ingredient in herbicide products such as **Transline**. It is broadleaf selective and also safe on many conifer trees. It can be effective on Yellow Starthistle if applied during the rosette to bolting stages.
- **Triclopyr** is the active ingredient in herbicide products such as **Garlon**, **Element**, and many “Poison Ivy and Tough Brush Killer” type products. It is broadleaf selective and can give effective control of Yellow Starthistle if applied from the seedling to bolting stages.

*Chemical recommendations are based on University of Idaho Extension Bulletin 865 [Idaho's Noxious Weeds 2011 Control Guidelines Noncrop and Rangeland Sites](#), the book [Weed Control in Natural Areas in the Western United States](#) published by UC Davis Weed Research & Information Center, and herbicide labels.*