



Wallowa County Weed Watch

Yellow Starthistle

A native of the Mediterranean, spiny Yellow Starthistle infests millions of acres in the West and is invading Wallowa County!

The Problem

Yellow Starthistle can form solid stands, displacing other vegetation, reducing forage for livestock and wildlife and increasing erosion. It is poisonous to horses and the spines can injure other grazers.

Yellow Starthistle grows fast and has penetrating roots. A single plant can produce up to 150,000 seeds in one year. Seeds begin to germinate in the fall, but can continue to germinate into the spring. About 95% of seeds will germinate and some may remain dormant for 10 years or more.

There are large patches of Yellow Starthistle in Tryon and Lookout Creeks of the Snake River. It is also scattered in lower Joseph Creek, Big Sheep and Imnaha River Canyon. Yellow Starthistle is a high priority at state and county levels and requires aggressive treatment measures.

Identification

Yellow Starthistle is a winter annual that grows 2 to 5 feet tall. It has a rosette of deeply lobed basal leaves. Upper leaves are linear. The plant has winged stems. The flower consists of bright yellow petals atop a distinctive spiny bud. Stout yellow spines up to 2 inches long radiate from each bract of the bud. The whole plant is covered in cottony pubescence, giving it a light green cast.

Seedlings sprout and form rosettes with the rain in the fall or spring. A flower stalk emerges from the rosette in May. In the fall the plant loses its leaves and dries to a silvery-grey skeleton with white cottony seed-heads, resembling Q-tips.

Treatment

Hand pulling can be effective, especially in new sites and before a crop of seeds has been produced. Be sure to get as much root as possible and continue pulling throughout the season. Yellow Starthistle can be grazed by cattle and sheep in the pre-spiny stage. Burning, mowing and tillage can help control infestations.

Yellow Starthistle is susceptible to many chemicals. Use 2,4-D before flowering, Tordon during the rosette stage through bud formation, or Telar (1.5 oz/Acre) during active growth. Curtail (1-5 quarts/Acre) can be used after rosette emergence but before bud formation. Curtail and Tordon remain in the soil longer than other chemicals. Revegetation following the initial control is critical. **Contact your local weed manager for more information.**



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Rosette



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Winged Stems



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Flower with spiny bracts



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Fall Q-tip stage

Flowering plant (left)

Read and follow all label instructions when applying herbicides. Trade names have been used to simplify instructions and no endorsement or warranty is expressed or implied by the Wallowa County Weed Board or this brochure.

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