

Yellow starthistle  
(*Centaurea solstitialis*)

Currently in Montana, noxious weed infest about 8.2 million acres. Many of these state listed noxious weeds were brought to America as ornamentals for gardens, medicinal purposes, by accident in discarded soil from a ship's ballast, or unintentionally in bags of seed brought from other parts of the world. Whatever the cause of introduction non-native plant species have found their way onto Montana's state listed noxious weed list.

Yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) is native to the Mediterranean region. It is thought that yellow starthistle was later introduced into the United States by accident as a seed contaminant in Chilean-harvested alfalfa seed shortly after the California Gold Rush. Habitats where yellow starthistle grow are disturbed areas, roadsides, rangelands, waste areas, overgrazed lands, and pastures, hay fields, along waterways, roadsides, and forests. If ingested by horses yellow starthistle causes "chewing disease;" a neurological disorder that creates brain lesions and ulcers in the mouth that can be fatal. Yellow starthistle has a taproot that can grow to depths of up to 3'. This long taproot provides the plant with the capacity to survive in hot, dry climates. The yellow starthistle has a bushy appearance; stems are grayish-green in color and can grow from 3-5' in height. Leaves are covered with hairs that look thick and wooly. The leaves that occur at the base of the plant are up to 3" long and have deep lobes; whereas the leaves that occur on the upper portion of the stalk are short and narrow, giving the stem a "winged" appearance. This plant produces bright yellow flowers that are surrounded at their base by sharp spines that are up to 1 ½" in length. Yellow starthistle reproduces only through seeds. Each plant can produce up to 150,000 seeds in a single growing season. Seeds typically germinate after about a year, but can remain viable in the soil for more than 3 years.

Please take a few moments to learn about noxious weeds. If noxious weeds are not currently a problem in your area, they may be in the near future. For more information about Montana's state listed noxious weeds, regulated plants, or weed species listed on your county weed list, please contact your local county weed district (can list weed district name here... ex: Lewis & Clark County Weed District) at \_(406)\_(Phone number)\_. Or you can contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-5600.