INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

Iberian starthistle
(*Centaurea iberica*)

Flowering Iberian starthistle
Photo: איתן פרמן

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PLANT?

DESCRIPTION

- Annual or biennial herbaceous plant that is native to Asia, northern Africa, and southern Europe.
- Mature plants grow up to 2 m tall.
- Stems are highly branched giving a bushy appearance.
- Stems and leaves are covered in fine, white hairs. The lower stem may have stiff, downward facing hairs while the upper stem may lack hair altogether.
- Flowers are white with light purple or pink tips and are surrounded by straw-coloured spines which exceed 2.5 cm in length at maturity.
- Leaves are divided into 6-14 pairs of narrow leaflets with toothed margins.
- Seeds are small (0.3 to 0.4 cm), white or brown streaked, and have a 0.1-0.25 cm plume of flat, white bristles.
- Produces a long, deep taproot.

PRIMARY THREATS: Iberian starthistle infestations can displace valuable forage species in pastures and rangelands. Its sharp spines deter grazing animals, impede recreational use, and restrict access for wildlife.

Patch of juvenile Iberian starthistle
Photo: Erhan Yelekci

BIOLOGY & SPREAD

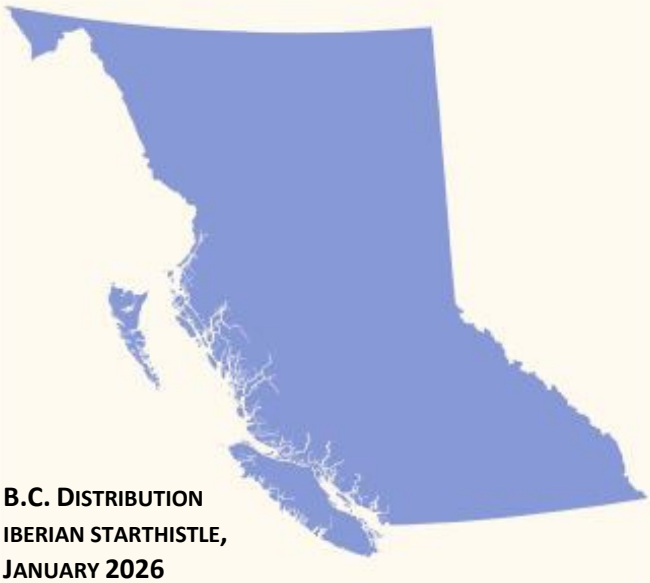
- Iberian starthistle reproduces primarily by seed.
- Plants germinate in the fall or early spring forming spiny rosettes in May and June
- Spreads by wind, livestock, vehicles, equipment, clothing, and contaminated hay and crop seed.
- Seeds disperse within the seed pod as a unit.
- Seeds can remain viable for up to 3 years.

For more information:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species/priority-species/priority-plants

BRITISH COLUMBIA

January 2026

Iberian starthistle (*Centaurea iberica*)



B.C. Distribution
Iberian starthistle,
January 2026

Habitat

- Thrives in disturbed areas such as along roadsides, rangelands, and pastures.
- Can establish in watercourses and riparian areas.
- Tolerates a variety of soil types including nutrient deficient soils.

Distribution & Status

- Iberian starthistle has not yet been established in British Columbia, but infestations have been reported in the United States.
- Regulated under the *Federal Plant Protection Act*. Prohibited Noxious Weed under the *Seeds Act*.
- Management goal is prevention of introduction and establishment.

Dense patch of Iberian starthistle Photo: איתן פרמן

Moth on a blooming Iberian starthistle
Photo: איתן פרמן

Report Invasive Species

Download the App!

www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species

What Can You Do?

- **REPORT** new sightings
- **Use** clean grain, hay, and straw
- **Maintain** healthy and diverse pastures
- **Clean** tools, equipment, and machinery
- **Treat** invasive species before disturbing a site with digging, mowing, or machinery

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