

# INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

## Yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*)

### HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PLANT?

#### DESCRIPTION

- **WARNING:** this species is not known to be currently found in BC.
- Native to southern Europe and western Eurasia.
- Winter annual or, rarely, a biennial or short-lived perennial forb.
- Grows from 0.6 to 1.0 m tall and has a long taproot that grows to depths of 1 m or more.
- Basal leaves are deeply lobed; upper leaves are entire and sharply pointed. Leaves are waxy and long near the ground (5-15 cm) and become progressively smaller up the stem (1-3 cm at the top).
- Stems are rigid, branching, winged, and covered with cottony hairs.
- Bright yellow flowers grow on the ends of branches and have large, sharp, straw-coloured thorns, which grow up to 2 cm long.
- 2 types of seeds are produced: plumed and plumeless.



Yellow starthistle flower  
Photo: Peggy Greb

**PRIMARY THREATS:** Yellow starthistle can establish dense populations that displace native plants and reduce wildlife habitat and forage. It is toxic to horses and causes the neurological “chewing disease” when eaten.



Yellow starthistle stems  
Photo: Harry Rose

#### BIOLOGY & SPREAD

- Reproduces primarily through seed production.
- A single plant produces 1 to 1,000 flowerheads with 30 to 80 seeds per flowerhead (up to 80,000 seeds in one year per plant).
- Seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to 10 years.
- Seeds contain a small, feathery plume and are wind dispersed over short distances.
- Barbs on the plume’s pappuses readily adhere to clothing and hair allowing for long-distance dispersal by humans and animals.

For more information:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species/priority-species/priority-plants>



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BC DISTRIBUTION  
YELLOW STARThISTLE, MARCH 2025

## REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

Download the App!



[www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species](http://www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species)

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Report** new sightings immediately. This species is not known to be currently found in BC.
- **Do not** disturb or move plants, only report them.
- **Ensure** seed mixes, grain, hay and straw are weed-free before purchasing.
- **Clean** tools and equipment before moving between areas.

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## HABITAT

- Yellow starthistle has previously been found in BC, but no populations have persisted.
- Prefers open grasslands and is shade intolerant. It is uncommon in deserts and moist coastal regions.
- Commonly found in disturbed areas along roadsides and within rangelands, pastures and woodlands.

## DISTRIBUTION & Status

- Species is regulated under the BC *Weed Control Act* in all regions of the province.
- Distributed throughout the western-most states in the USA.
- Management goal is prevention.



Yellow starthistle infestation  
Photo: Steve Dewey



Yellow starthistle leaves  
Photo: Harry Rose

