**Humboldt Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area**

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 Providing land managers, owners and local weed control groups assistance

 through funding, agency and weed group coordination, communication and cooperation



Hello from the Humboldt Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area! This month we would like to introduce you to another state listed noxious weed,yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitalis).* Yellow starthistle is a long-lived winter annual, and occasionally, a biennial broadleaf plant. It is highly competitive and often develops impenetrable stands, displacing desirable vegetation. In the western United States, yellow starthistle is considered one of the most serious rangeland weeds. It is found throughout most of California and northward into Oregon and Washington, typically to about 5900 feet, but has been found at higher elevations and is rapidly moving east into Nevada and surrounding states. Yellow starthistle inhabits agricultural land and other disturbed sites as well as grassland, cultivated fields, pastures, roadsides, and open sites on hillsides and in woodlands.

Seedlings are dull green. The first few leaves are usually lance shaped with the widest part of the leaf above the middle. Subsequent leaves form a rosette. The early rosette leaves are highly variable, often lance shaped with the widest part above the middle, and have simple to lobed edges. Generally, the upper and lower leaf surfaces are densely covered with stiff thick hairs and fine cottony hairs (visible with magnification).

Yellow starthistle is a gray-green to blue-green plant that ranges from 6 inches to 6-1/2 feet tall. Stems are stiff, wiry and single in small plants and openly branch near the base or above in larger plants. Rosette leaves are typically deeply lobed, often appear ruffled, have toothed to wavy edges, and usually wither by bloom. Stem leaves are mostly linear to narrowly oblong, or lance shaped with the widest part above the middle. Leaf bases extend down the stems giving stems a winged appearance. Lower stem leaves are sometimes deeply lobed. All leaves are densely covered with fine, white, cottony hairs that hide most of the stiff, thick hairs and glandular dots also present on the leaves.

Flowering takes place from June through December, but can be delayed by mowing and grazing. Many small and narrow, bright yellow, tubular flowers cluster into a round to egg-shaped flower head. Flower heads form singly at both the stem tip and sometimes where branches meet the main stem. At the base of each flower head are long stiff spines.

**Control Methods:**

**Tillage:** Tilling is often used to damage root systems. In young plants, tilling helps separate the shoots. It also damages the roots in most large plants. Tilling must only be done only when the surface of the soil is dry. This prevents the re-growth of the weed. Thus, the best time to do this is in the early summer months. However, you can repeat the cultivation process in the same season after rainfall stimulates more germination.

**Hand Pulling**: There are several steps you must take to kill and prevent yellow starthistle from growing back. The first thing you should do is look to see what stage the plant's growth is in. The best time for removal is after it has bolted, but before the weed has gotten its first flowers. When pulling the weed you must learn to remove all stem material above the ground. Even leaving a two inch piece of stem above the ground could allow the weed to grow back. It is also important to make sure the soil around the weed is not disturbed much. Too much disturbance could allow new seeds to re-establish themselves.

**Grazing Methods:** Sheep, goats, and cattle all eat yellow starthistle . Sheep and cattle will only eat it before the spines on the weed form, but goats will eat it no matter what growth stage it is in. Intensive grazing is an effective way to control yellow starthistle. The best time for intensive grazing is in May and June. This process will reduce plant and canopy size, as well as seed production .

As always, please notify the HWCWMA if you see medusahead growing within the Humboldt River watershed. Our [staff](http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/program-information/who-we-are.aspx) can provide the property owner or appropriate public agency with site-specific advice on how best to remove it. We have an opportunity to stop it from spreading if we act quickly. We [map](http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/maps.aspx) all known locations of regulated noxious weeds in order to help us and others locate new infestations in time to control them.

The Humboldt Watershed CWMA has also developed a website to serve as a clearinghouse for information on weeds in the Humboldt Watershed. Our website (http://www.humboldtweedfree.org) contains fact sheets for state listed noxious weeds in Nevada, Board of Director’s information, funding partner’s links, and many more features including a detailed project proposal packet that you can print, fill out and mail back to us at your convenience. We are looking to expand our project area outside of the Humboldt River and always welcome new funding opportunities and partnerships.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Andi Porreca, HWCWMA Coordinator at (775) 762-2636 or email her at aporreca@humboldtweedfree.org. Or you may speak with Rhonda Heguy, HWCWMA President at (775) 738-3085, email: hwcwma@gmail.com.