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Yellow starthistle

en.wikipedia.org

Centaurea solstitialis, yellow star-thistle, is a member of the Asteraceae family, native to the Mediterranean Basin region. [Wikipedia](#)

Scientific name: *Centaurea solstitialis*

Higher classification: [Centaurea](#)

Rank: Species

moved, to spread itself all over the state, especially the hot, dry areas typical of the central valley farm and ranch lands. Beside its obviously bristly bad manners, it is considered a “weed” when its “roots steal moisture from other plants,” to quote Matt Weiser in the *Sacramento Bee* article on May 26, 2012. He goes on to explain that “before leafing out much on the surface, the plant shoots its roots down as deep as 6 feet to find moisture...it can, over time, eliminate even oak forests, which grow in much the same manner and need the deep moisture to propagate seedlings.” Blooming annually, “its prickly arms grow so dense they shade out other plants...a field will lose native surface growth, such as grasses, flowers and forbs, that capture rain and snowmelt, allowing it to filter into the ground. Instead, run-off moves across the land much faster in a star thistle field, causing erosion.” And then it goes to seed! “A single large plant can produce more than 100,000 seeds, which can survive as long as five years in the soil, waiting for optimal growing conditions.”

Olives weren't the only plants introduced to CA by the 1850s-- Hello Invasive Star Thistle! We all grew up with it, knew it was prickly and a “weed,” but who knew the history? I just thought it was the reason my cowboy dad wore chaps--since it could grow to 6 foot and our hills were full of it!

Turns out, this invasive weed, fatally toxic to horses, arrived from its origins in the Middle East with our ancestors, via Chile, from whence they shipped alfalfa seed to California beginning in the 1850s. Ironically, when the *Gold Fever* got many to California but cattle and farming became the real “gold,” this golden invader came along for the ride. Since then, its bristly seeds have clung to anything that



Check out:

www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/yellowstar.shtml

Flower - Cindy Roche

invasive.org --picture above

And now it is not satisfied with just the hot, dry valleys and foothills--it is climbing up into the Sierras, and with funding cuts, attempts to stop it are losing ground! Groups like Leading Edge Project, coordinated by Wendy West, a UC Cooperative Extension advisor, say their work is not expensive, but due to erosion and fire hazards, their work should be a funding priority--for the whole state!



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