

Yellow Starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*)

Identification: Yellow starthistle is a facultative winter annual, typically germinating in the fall and overwintering as a rosette, which resembles a dandelion (below left). Plants bolt in early to mid-summer, and may continue flowering until frost. Plants are easiest to recognize when flowering due to the sharp spines on the flower head, up to 1" in length, and the bright yellow color (below middle). Another characteristic to help identify it is the flattened or winged stems (below right).



Impacts: Yellow starthistle is an aggressive colonizer, present on more than 17 million acres in California alone. It reduces wildlife habitat by outcompeting native plants, reduces forage for livestock, and the sharp spines inhibit recreational activities. The plant is toxic to horses, causing the neurological disorder "chewing disease" which can be fatal.

Habitat Yellow starthistle grows on rangelands, pastures, agricultural areas, along highways or roads, railroad tracks, and other transportation or communication lines. It is most common in sunny, disturbed areas. It has been reported in 10 counties in Montana. The most recent reports are from the following counties: Beaverhead (2009, 2 plants), Stillwater (2009, plants scattered over 10 acres), and Gallatin (2010, 1 plant).

Spread: Long distance dispersal is primarily caused by human activities. Seed heads are caught in the undercarriages of vehicles or in road maintenance equipment and transported in contaminated seed or soil. Additionally, birds such as pheasants, quail, and finches feed heavily on yellow starthistle seed providing for long distance dispersal.

Management Priorities: Yellow starthistle is the only **Priority 1A** noxious weed in Montana. Prevention and EDRR (early detection and rapid response) to eradicate the plant before it establishes are the top priorities for management. Learn how to recognize this plant and call the MT Dept. of Agriculture (406-444-3140) or your county weed coordinator or Extension agent if you find it. For more information on yellow starthistle, see "Yellow Starthistle: Identification, Biology, and Integrated Management".

<http://msuextension.org/publications/AgandNaturalResources/MT201101AG.pdf>

Want to be more involved in efforts to keep Montana yellow starthistle-free?

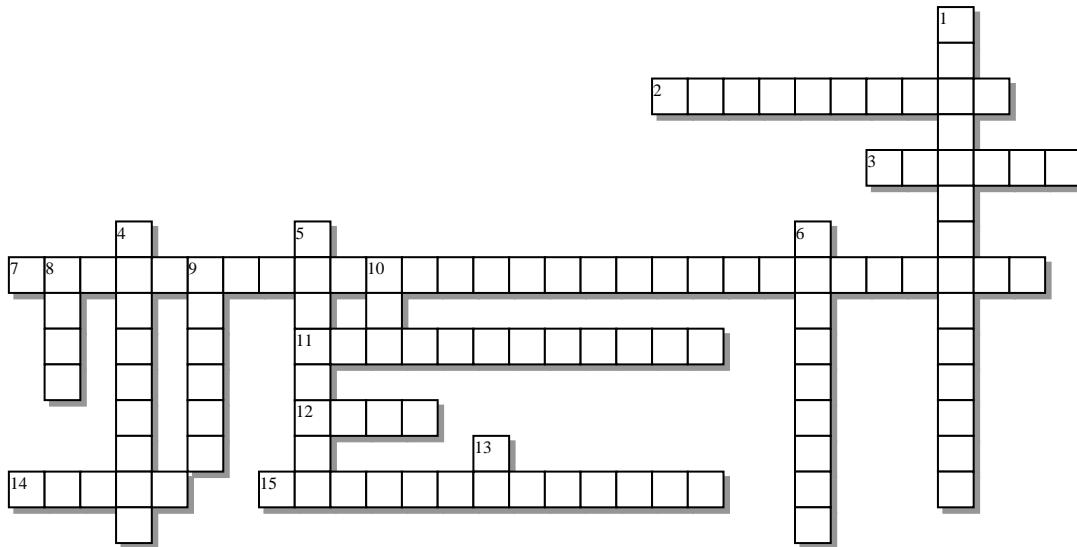
We could really use your help! Participate in the "**Yellow Starthistle Weed Watch Day**" August 4, 2011 in Stillwater County. The patch discovered near Columbus in 2009 needs a concerted, community-wide effort. Plants were growing where construction vehicles were stored, meaning seed heads may have been transported throughout the area. You'll be assigned a route to search and your hard work will be rewarded with an afternoon barbecue and a demonstration by Megan Parker of "Working Dogs for Conservation". Megan trains dogs to detect high priority invasive species. For information, see "Upcoming Workshops and Events" on our website.

<http://www.msuextension.org/invasiveplantsMangold/extensionsub.html>

Please register for this event so we'll know how many burgers to have ready for the grill. A registration form is on the website, or call Stillwater County Weed Coordinator Lindsey Clark at 406-322-1106.



Weed Post Puzzle: Test your knowledge of Yellow Starthistle



Across:

- 2 - The county to be surveyed on the "Yellow Starthistle Weed Watch Day".
 3 - Ouch! Get your gloves and shin guards, these nasty YST weapons may be up to 1" long.
 7 - A community-wide event on August 4th to search for YST, followed by a bbq and a demonstration with a weed detecting dog.
 11 - The person to call if you want to register for the Yellow Starthistle Weed Watch Day over the phone.
 12 - A cottony white _____ remains on the YST receptacle after flowers disperse.*
 14 - YST plants bloom from summer until _____.
 15 - To avoid being a weed vector, check and clean this area frequently to remove seed heads.

Down:

- 1 - An outcome of horses eating YST.
 4 - One of two YST seed types that is retained in the seed head longer, sometimes throughout the winter.*
 5 - The Montana county with the most recent report of YST.
 6 - Yellow starthistle rosettes may resemble this common lawn pest.
 8 - Acronym to describe a weed management strategy of finding, reporting and eradicating a weed before it can establish and spread.
 9 - A description for stems like YST's that look like they've been flattened in a plant press.
 10 - The number of Montana counties that have reported YST.
 13 - Priority level for YST in Montana.

*Refer to the Extension Bulletin for answers to these questions.

*Solutions are posted on the MSU Extension Invasive Rangeland Weed website:
<http://www.msuetextension.org/invasiveplantsMangold/extensionsub.html>*