

Yellow starthistle

Centaurea solstitialis

Description

Introduced to the United States in contaminated alfalfa seed.

Habit

Pubescent winter annual, or rarely a biennial or short-lived perennial forb.

Leaves

Produces rosette leaves that lie close to the ground; lower leaves are 2-6 in. long, progressively smaller up the stem. Upper leaves are 0.4-1.2 in. long, narrow, and densely covered in cobwebby hairs late in the season.

Stems

Stiff, erect, 6-72 in. in height; openly branched.

Flowers

Inflorescences borne in solitary flowerheads on stem tips; involucre 0.5-0.7 in. long, phyllaries have 1 long central spine (0.4-1 in. long) and 2 more pairs of short lateral spines densely





covered with hairs.

Fruits and Seeds

Achenes of 2 types, both glabrous and 2-3 mm long. Most seeds have short, 2-5 mm, stiff pappus (plumed). Periphery seeds are darker in color with no pappus.

Habitat

Native to southern Europe and western Eurasia. Can be found in disturbed sites such as deserts, high mountain and moist coastal sites.

Reproduction

By wind dispersed seeds.

Similar

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Responds to integrated pest management programs. Hand-pulling, hoeing or weed whipping can be effective for small populations. Mowing can reduce density, but mowing heights must be set correctly and mowings must be timed. Herbicides along are not recommended and six natural insect enemies have been implemented.

Credits

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