

Weed of The Week:

Yellow Starthistle

(*Centaurea solstitialis* L.)



Photo by E. Lane, Colorado State Weed Coordinator

Introduction:

Yellow starthistle is an annual found throughout the western United States. It grows up to 2.5 feet in height and has rigid branching stems that are covered with a cotton like fiber. Bright yellow flowers have thorns that can be $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in length. The flowers contain two types of seeds: one is light colored with a tuft of soft bristles, the other is dark with no bristles. It grows in many different soil types and favors roadsides or other disturbed areas. Seedlings are similar to dandelions in appearance.

Distribution:

Distribution of yellow starthistle is fairly limited within the State of Colorado, infesting only a small number of acres in locations on the Front Range and the western slope. Currently Arapahoe County does not have this plant but it is only a matter of time with the amount of development and land disturbance that is taking place. California is the worst area in the west with almost 15 million acres infested and can be found in 56 of 58 counties.



Photo by E. Lane, Colorado State Weed Coordinator

Why is it a problem?

Yellow starthistle is a problem to rangeland, pastures and grasslands, because it decreases the amount of usable forage for grazing animals. It can also reduce land value and reduce access to recreational areas. In addition, infestations can reduce wildlife habitat and forage, displace native plants, and decrease native plant and animal diversity. By displacing native plants and animals, dense infestations threaten natural ecosystems and nature reserves by fragmenting sensitive plant and animal habitat. Other problems include a significant reduction in soil moisture, toxicity to horses and can physically injure both humans and animals.



If you see this plant within Arapahoe County or would like more information contact:

Russell Johnson
Arapahoe County Weed Control Specialist
10730 E. Briarwood Ave., Suite 100
Centennial, CO 80112
Direct: 720-874-6713
E-mail: rjohnson@co.arapahoe.co.us