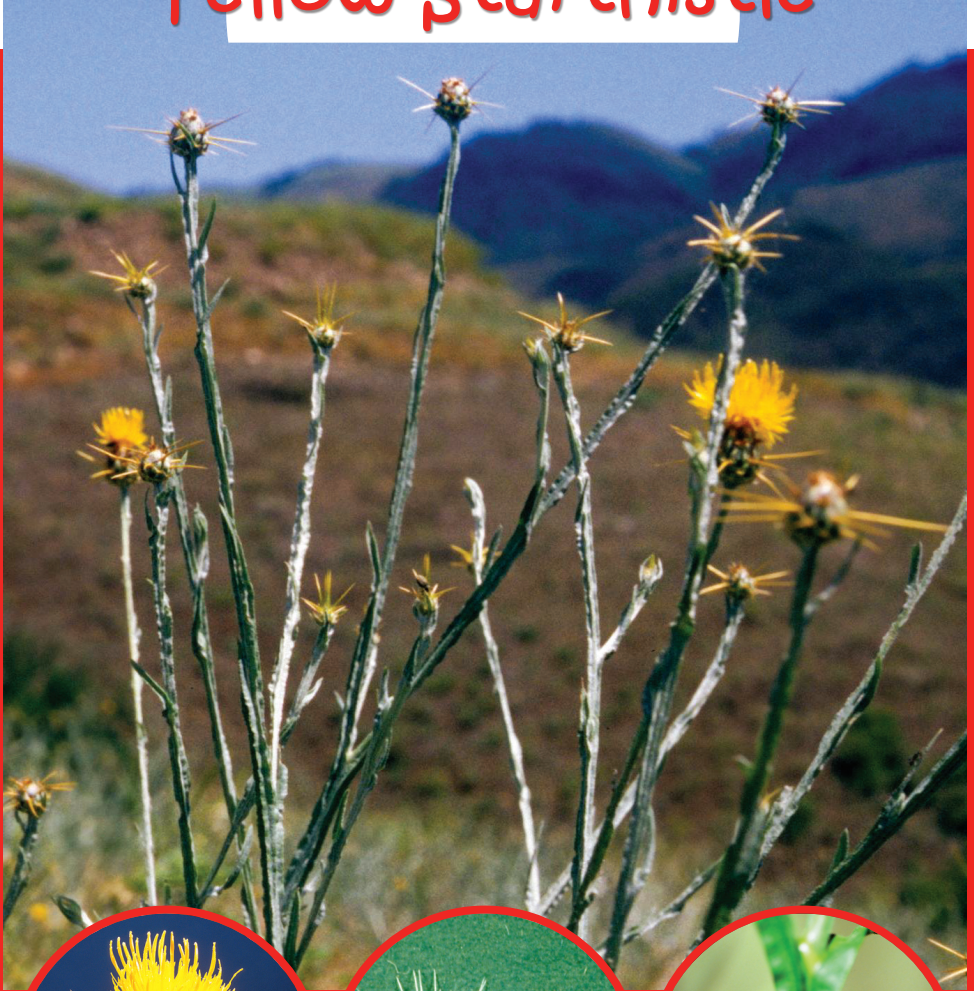




1

Yellow Starthistle



flower



seeds



stem

Yellow Starthistle

Genus: Centaurea

Species: solstitialis

Priority Listing: 1A

Annual

Yellow starthistle is native to the Mediterranean region. It is thought that yellow starthistle was later introduced into the United States by accident as a seed contaminant in Chilean-harvested alfalfa seed shortly after the California Gold Rush.

Habitats where yellow starthistle grows are disturbed areas, roadsides, rangelands, waste areas, overgrazed lands, pastures, hay fields, along waterways, roadsides, and forests.

If ingested by horses yellow starthistle causes ‘chewing disease,’ a neurological disorder that creates brain lesions and ulcers in the mouth that can be fatal.

Yellow starthistle has a **taproot** that can grow to depths of up to 3’! This long taproot provides the plant with the capacity to survive in hot, dry climates.

The yellow starthistle has a bushy appearance; stems are grayish-green in color and can grow 3’ to 5’ in height! Leaves are covered with hairs that look thick and wooly. The leaves that occur at the base of the plant are up to 3” long and have deep lobes; whereas the leaves that occur on the upper portion of the stalk are short and narrow, giving the stem a ‘winged’ appearance.

This plant produces bright yellow flowers that are surrounded at their base by sharp spines that are up to $\frac{3}{4}$ ” in length.

Yellow starthistle reproduces only through seeds. Each plant can produce up to 150,000 seeds in a single growing season! Seeds typically **germinate** after about a year, but can remain **viable** in the soil for more than 3 years.



Photo courtesy of Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org

Annual: a plant that completes its life cycle and dies within one year

Germination: is the process by which plants, fungi, and bacteria emerge from seeds and spores, and begin growth

Taproot: a main single root of a plant, generally growing straight down

Viable: capable of growing or developing