

# Yellow Starthistle

*Centaurea solstitialis*

Much of Asotin County's 200,000 acres of rangeland have some degree of infestation of yellow starthistle. Yellow starthistle is a winter annual that usually germinates in the fall when moisture conditions and temperatures are optimal. However, its highly adaptable nature allows it to germinate at any time of the year. Its root system extends further into the soil than other annuals and often out-competes spring plants for moisture and nutrients. It can grow on loams or shallow rocky soils. Two types of seeds are produced in each flower head. The plumed seeds are dispersed by wind or other disturbances. Plumeless seeds remain in the seed heads until the heads fall apart. This rugged and adaptable plant may grow on rangeland, edges of cropland, idle farmlands, pastures, roadsides, railways, and recreational areas.

Since yellow starthistle is an annual, the prevention of seed production for three years will dramatically reduce the infestation. 90% of the seeds remain viable for 3 years, but the remaining 10% may remain viable for up to 15 years.

In Asotin County, we have 5 biological controls for yellow starthistle. The peacock fly and the gall fly are widespread throughout the county. Although the flies can reduce seed production by up to 60%, enough seeds are still produced that there is no significant decline in weed population. The bud weevil, the hairy weevil, and the flower weevil are also present in the county. The adult and larvae hairy weevil feed on yellow starthistle plants and seeds. This weevil has significantly reduced yellow starthistle populations in some areas of the county. Biological controls will never eliminate yellow starthistle from Asotin, but some day its populations may be small enough that it will blend into the landscape as just another plant.

The Asotin County Noxious Weed Control Board will cost share the purchase of biocontrols for yellow starthistle with Asotin County landowners. If you would like to know more about this program or you would like a biocontrol assessment of your property, please call the Weed Office at (509) 243-2098.

