



# Starthistle

## History

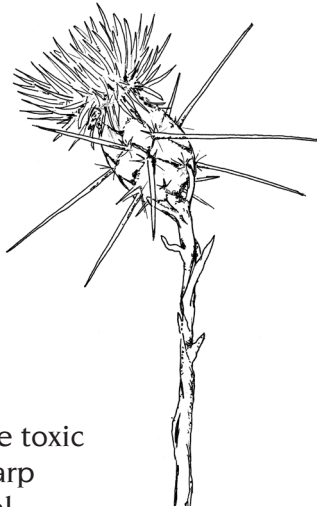
Yellow and purple starthistles were introduced to California in about 1850. Originally from the Mediterranean region of southern Europe, seeds of these invasive weeds are thought to have arrived in contaminated alfalfa seed.

## Identification

Yellow starthistle is a grayish-green plant with multiple stems that extend in all directions from the base, forming bushy-looking clusters. It can grow up to five feet tall and produces bright yellow flowers with long, sharp spines. The less common purple star thistle grows up to four feet tall with dark brown stems and flowers varying from lavender to deep purple.

## Invasion in Our Parks

More than 15 million acres of California are heavily infested with non-native starthistles. Their competitiveness and lack of natural enemies make them a very successful invader. These weeds can develop dense, impenetrable stands that crowd out native plants. They increase fire danger, are toxic to horses, and their sharp spines create a physical



Starthistle



# Starthistle

## History

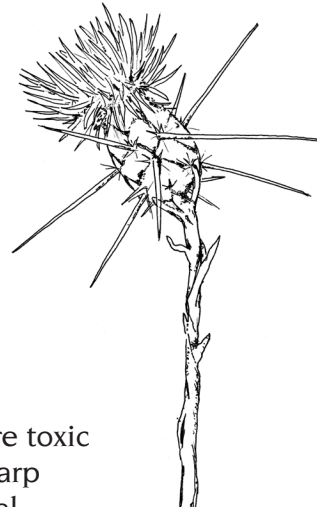
Yellow and purple starthistles were introduced to California in about 1850. Originally from the Mediterranean region of southern Europe, seeds of these invasive weeds are thought to have arrived in contaminated alfalfa seed.

## Identification

Yellow starthistle is a grayish-green plant with multiple stems that extend in all directions from the base, forming bushy-looking clusters. It can grow up to five feet tall and produces bright yellow flowers with long, sharp spines. The less common purple star thistle grows up to four feet tall with dark brown stems and flowers varying from lavender to deep purple.

## Invasion in Our Parks

More than 15 million acres of California are heavily infested with non-native starthistles. Their competitiveness and lack of natural enemies make them a very successful invader. These weeds can develop dense, impenetrable stands that crowd out native plants. They increase fire danger, are toxic to horses, and their sharp spines create a physical



Starthistle



# Starthistle

## History

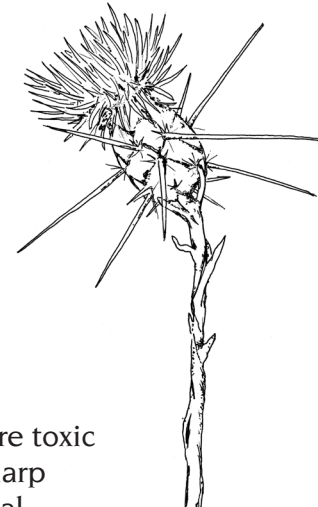
Yellow and purple starthistles were introduced to California in about 1850. Originally from the Mediterranean region of southern Europe, seeds of these invasive weeds are thought to have arrived in contaminated alfalfa seed.

## Identification

Yellow starthistle is a grayish-green plant with multiple stems that extend in all directions from the base, forming bushy-looking clusters. It can grow up to five feet tall and produces bright yellow flowers with long, sharp spines. The less common purple star thistle grows up to four feet tall with dark brown stems and flowers varying from lavender to deep purple.

## Invasion in Our Parks

More than 15 million acres of California are heavily infested with non-native starthistles. Their competitiveness and lack of natural enemies make them a very successful invader. These weeds can develop dense, impenetrable stands that crowd out native plants. They increase fire danger, are toxic to horses, and their sharp spines create a physical



Starthistle

barrier to both wildlife movement and human recreation. Starthistle infestations in our parks displace native vegetation, degrade natural habitat and threaten biodiversity in native ecosystems.

### **Prevention and Control in the Parks**

- Correctly timed mowing, burning, and cultivation over a period of years may remove stands and control the spread.
- Mowing is done as the majority of flowers begin to bloom and before seeds are produced. Mowing too late may increase seed dispersal and plant distribution.
- \* Plants are burned at the end of the rainy season.
- Herbicides are applied in the spring when plants are in the sensitive seedling stage and soil moisture is high.
- Continual monitoring and spot eradication may be necessary.

### **Helping to Halt the Spread at Home**

- Learn to recognize new starthistle plants and take prompt action by pulling the plants while they are small.
- Drive on established roads and trails to prevent the transportation of the starthistle seed.
- Remove weed seeds from vehicle and bicycle tires, shoes, clothing, and animals.
- Grazing can be effective in reducing the starthistle seed production. Sheep, goats, and cattle eat starthistle before spines form on the plant. For further information, contact the California Department of Food and Agriculture at [www.cdfa.ca.gov/invasives](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/invasives)

barrier to both wildlife movement and human recreation. Starthistle infestations in our parks displace native vegetation, degrade natural habitat and threaten biodiversity in native ecosystems.

### **Prevention and Control in the Parks**

- Correctly timed mowing, burning, and cultivation over a period of years may remove stands and control the spread.
- Mowing is done as the majority of flowers begin to bloom and before seeds are produced. Mowing too late may increase seed dispersal and plant distribution.
- \* Plants are burned at the end of the rainy season.
- Herbicides are applied in the spring when plants are in the sensitive seedling stage and soil moisture is high.
- Continual monitoring and spot eradication may be necessary.

### **Helping to Halt the Spread at Home**

- Learn to recognize new starthistle plants and take prompt action by pulling the plants while they are small.
- Drive on established roads and trails to prevent the transportation of the starthistle seed.
- Remove weed seeds from vehicle and bicycle tires, shoes, clothing, and animals.
- Grazing can be effective in reducing the starthistle seed production. Sheep, goats, and cattle eat starthistle before spines form on the plant. For further information, contact the California Department of Food and Agriculture at [www.cdfa.ca.gov/invasives](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/invasives)

barrier to both wildlife movement and human recreation. Starthistle infestations in our parks displace native vegetation, degrade natural habitat and threaten biodiversity in native ecosystems.

### **Prevention and Control in the Parks**

- Correctly timed mowing, burning, and cultivation over a period of years may remove stands and control the spread.
- Mowing is done as the majority of flowers begin to bloom and before seeds are produced. Mowing too late may increase seed dispersal and plant distribution.
- \* Plants are burned at the end of the rainy season.
- Herbicides are applied in the spring when plants are in the sensitive seedling stage and soil moisture is high.
- Continual monitoring and spot eradication may be necessary.

### **Helping to Halt the Spread at Home**

- Learn to recognize new starthistle plants and take prompt action by pulling the plants while they are small.
- Drive on established roads and trails to prevent the transportation of the starthistle seed.
- Remove weed seeds from vehicle and bicycle tires, shoes, clothing, and animals.
- Grazing can be effective in reducing the starthistle seed production. Sheep, goats, and cattle eat starthistle before spines form on the plant. For further information, contact the California Department of Food and Agriculture at [www.cdfa.ca.gov/invasives](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/invasives)