

Plant-out-of-place Canada Thistle



Plant-out-of-place Yellow Starthistle



Plant-out-of-place Purple Starthistle



EXOTIC HERB Purple Starthistle

(*Centaurea calcitrapa*)

Description

- Annual plant ½-4 ft tall
- Numerous small (¼ in wide) purple, white, or pink flower heads surrounded by long, sharp spines
- Mature flowers WITHOUT a pappus (tiny tufts of hair on each seed for dispersal– like a dandelion)
- Young leaves deeply lobed, grey, with cobweb-like hairs and light midrib
- Mature leaves 4-8 in long, without hairs
- Stems without “winged” ridges

Habitat

- Agricultural, grasslands, roadsides, disturbed areas

Don't confuse with...

Iberian Starthistle

(*Centaurea iberica*) which has:

- Purple flowers with spines, wider (½ in) than PST (¼ in)
- Has a pappus (bristle on seed)



Purple Starthistle seed (left)
Iberian Starthistle seed (right)

Image credits: Front top: NPS; Front middle/bottom: © Barry Rice, The Nature Conservancy; Back: © 2001 CDFA

EXOTIC HERB Yellow Starthistle

(*Centaurea solstitialis*)

Description

- Annual plant ½-6 ft tall
- Numerous small bright yellow flower heads surrounded by long, sharp yellow spines (½-1 in long)
- Mature leaves grey-green, covered with fine cottony hairs, giving the plant a grey-silver appearance from a distance
- Stems are “winged”
- Young plants form a rosette (circular cluster of leaves)

Habitat

- Agricultural, grasslands, roadsides, disturbed areas

Don't confuse with...

Tocalote or Napa Thistle

(*Centaurea melitensis*) which has:

- Yellow flower heads with ½-in-long spines, shorter than YST
- Grows to 3 ft tall, shorter than YST
- Also a plant-out-of-place



Yellow Starthistle



Tocalote

Image credits: Front top/middle, Back left: © Barry Rice, The Nature Conservancy; Front bottom: © Mandy Tu, The Nature Conservancy; Back right: © John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy

EXOTIC HERB Canada Thistle

(*Cirsium arvense*)



Description

- Erect perennial plant 1-3 ft tall
- Purplish-lavender or white flower heads ½-1 in across, numerous, almost without spines
- Variably lobed lance-shaped leaves with yellowish spines along the margins; leaves “clasp” stem
- Smooth to slightly hairy stems with no “wings”
- Young plants form a rosette (circular cluster of leaves)

Habitat

- Can grow in all but waterlogged soils

Don't confuse with...

Musk Thistle

(*Carduus nutans*) which has:

- Larger flower heads (2-3 in) with broad spines
- Hairy leaves

Image credits: Front top: Mary Ellen (Mel) Harte, Bugwood.org; Front middle, Back top: NPS; Front bottom: © John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy