

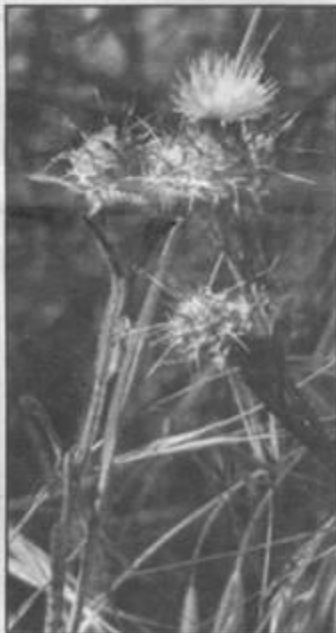
Yellow starthistle: wanted dead only

By **STEPHANIE AKERS**
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Have you seen this weed? Yellow Starthistle is a non-native, invasive, noxious weed that is toxic to horses and will depreciate your property value. It has painful spines on its flower heads that reach about two inches in length, and it is intolerant to shade and irrigation. It is very drought tolerant, its roots tend to reach from three to six feet into the ground.

Sound familiar? How about Tocalote? Also known as Malta Starthistle, Tocalote is similar in appearance to Yellow Star, but the flower heads are much smaller, as are the spines. Tocalote has the same harmful properties as Yellow Starthistle and is to be regarded in the same manner.

Timing and proper procedure is everything when eradicating Yellow Starthistle. Early in the season, usually around April, preemergent herbicide is effective to kill the plants before they come up. Once the plant is up, mowing is not recommended before flowering. This can



Tocalote is similar to yellow starthistle but has more blooms, smaller spines. AKERS PHOTO



Stephanie Akers and Sweetwater resident Frank Hazelton identifying a noxious weed as Malta Starthistle (Tocalote). SUE LEEPER PHOTO

cause the plant to reemerge as a smaller, more annoying cluster called a "pin cushion." At this point, a post-emergent spray can be used (thought it will likely kill all surrounding vegetation) or hand pulling is effective. Once the plant has bloomed at about 2 to 5 percent then it is safe to mow, because the plant has not yet gone to seed. Beyond that point, the plant has produced seeds, and the only safe eradication method would be to pull the weed and place it in a plastic bag to be stored for next burning season.

Right about now is mowing time, depending on your elevation. If you have Yellow Starthistle, or any other noxious weeds such as Tocalote, Italian Starthistle, Milk Thistle, or others, please call Stephanie Akers, Sierra Re-

source Conservation District Weed Technician at (559) 349-7462. For advice or for information on upcoming Yellow Starthistle Eradication workshops, don't hesitate to call! Let's kill those nasty weeds!



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