

Malta Starthistle Fact Sheet

Centaurea Melitensis

Asteraceae Family



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Distinguishing Features:

- 1 **Flowers:** The flowers are yellow, span up to 1.5 inches, and are surrounded by a ring of sharp tan spines.
- 2 **Seeds:** Seeds are tan with gray stripes. They are covered with fine hairs and have hooks to encourage spread by contact with other animals. Seeds can survive for up to 3 years in the soil.
- 3 **Leaves:** The leaves are alternate and narrowly oblong with smooth, toothed margins. They can be covered with stiff, thick hairs and resinous dots (University of Nevada: Reno).
- 4 **Flowering Time:** Malta Starthistle flowers from May through September.
- 5 **Life cycle:** Malta Starthistle sprouts in late fall, remains a basal rosette through the winter, and in the spring grows 1-2 foot stems lined with spiny thorns. It flowers through the summer, producing seed in the fall.

Impacts:

- Malta Starthistle produces vigorous early growth and large mats that quickly displace other native species.
- Due to its' spiny thorns, Malta Starthistle can reduce an areas potential for recreation.
- Malta Starthistle has been implicated in the emergence of the neurological disease "Chewing Disease" in horses.



Forest and Kim Starr, Starr Environmental, Bugwood.org

Control:

- Small infestations of Malta Starthistle can be effectively controlled by manually pulling and disposed of in the trash prior to seed production.
- Biological control is largely ineffective. It is a poor grazing plant due to its thorns and toxicity. Animals avoid it if possible.
- When applied just before flower production, chemical control can be effective in controlling Malta Starthistle populations.

