

PURPLE STARHISTLE

Centaurea calcitrapa L.
Asteraceae, the sunflower family

Category: EDRR

FACTSHEET INFORMATION

Summary of Invasiveness

- Purple starthistle is an invasive plant that rapidly reproduces to form dense monocultures, inhibiting the growth of nearby plants.
- It decreases biodiversity, reduces hay and forage values, and disrupts recreational activities.
- Sharp spines deter grazing animals, and if ingested, are toxic to horses causing chewing disease.

Description

- Annual or perennial that can grow 2-3 feet tall.
- Rosettes have spines in the center.
- Leaves are 4-8 inches long, hairy, with lobed margins.
- Flowers are purple to pink with spine-like bracts over 1 inch long.
- Seeds do not have plumes and are the distinguishing feature between it and Iberian starthistle.

Introduction and Movement

- Purple starthistle is native to the Mediterranean and southern Europe and was likely introduced as a seed contaminant.
- Inhabits floodplains, dry forests, grasslands, and rangelands.
- It can easily spread through seed dispersal by wind, water, or human and animal vectors.

Prevention Strategy

- To prevent accidental introductions, learn how to identify Purple starthistle and report any sightings.
- Make sure to remove and properly dispose of all seed and plant materials on vehicles, clothing, shoes and pets before you exit or enter outdoor recreational sites.
- Always Remember To:

KNOCK IT OFF!

Sources

- <https://invasive-species.extension.org/centaurea-calcitrapa-purple-starthistle/>
- Idaho's Noxious Weeds 9th Edition, University of Idaho: <http://www.extension.uidaho.edu/publishing/pdf/BUL/BUL816.pdf>.



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Malcolm Storey, BioImages - Virtual Field Guide, Bugwood.org

PURPLE STARHISTLE DISTRIBUTION MAP



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