



Invasive and Noxious Weed Fact Sheet: Malta Starthistle



Malta starthistle (*Centaurea melitensis*) is a close relative of yellow starthistle. It is from the Mediterranean region. This plant is an annual or biennial and readily infests disturbed sites. It is especially problematic along roadsides in and around Tucson, in the upper sonoran Desert, semi-desert grasslands, and interior chaparral. Like yellow starthistle and Russian knapweed, Malta starthistle can cause chewing disease in horses. Like so many invasive weed species, Malta starthistle will rapidly displace diverse native vegetation and create a monoculture, or pure stand of the weed. When this occurs, range forage value is lost, as it is low in palatability. Its root structure is ineffective at protecting soil against erosion. The spiny flower head on Malta starthistle guarantees that recreationists will avoid infested areas.



Malta Starthistle Rosette

Key Characteristics

- Cool-season forb
- Grows 1-3 feet tall
- Short stalked, lobed basal leaves from a rosette
- Upper leaves are narrow and pointed
- Stems are erect, branched, rough, and hairy
- Yellow flowers develop with floral bracts that are tipped with many slender, but short spines that may appear yellow, brown, or purple in color

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Project Partners: Coronado RC&D, U of A Cooperative Extension, SE Arizona Weed Management Area, NRCS, Whitewater Draw NRCD, Willcox-San Simon NRCD, Hereford NRCD, Gila Valley, Redington NRCD, San Pedro NRCD, and the counties of Cochise, Graham, and Greenlee

Treatment and Prevention of *Malta Starthistle*



"Noxious Weed" means any species of plant which is, or likely to be, detrimental or destructive and difficult to control or eradicate.

"Invasive Weeds" are non-indigenous plants that take over and destroy native species.



If you have *Malta Starthistle* on your property or find it as you are out and about, what can you do to help eradicate this noxious weed?

IDENTIFY

TREAT

MONITOR

1. Notify your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and bring in the plant for identification.
2. You can use a non-restricted broad-leaf herbicide and apply it to the plant as soon as possible. The key to stopping the plant from spreading is to kill it before it blooms and seeds out!
3. The first and most important step to be considered is prevention—keeping weeds from becoming established. Seeds can stay in the ground for long periods of time. To eradicate it completely, you must continue to monitor and treat any new seedlings you see.
 - ◆ Plant and maintain desirable plant species to compete with Malta Starthistle.
 - ◆ Avoid driving in weed-infested areas.
 - ◆ To avoid transporting seeds, remove weed seeds from clothing after walking in infested areas.
 - ◆ Clean farm equipment, including herbicide sprayers, when moving between fields or pastures.
 - ◆ After livestock have grazed a weed-infested area, feed them weed-free forage and wait at least five days before moving them to weed-free area. It may be necessary to clean their hair of invasive weed seeds, as well.
 - ◆ Be well informed and tell others of the potential problem.
 - ◆ Observe and obey all noxious plant warning signs.
 - ◆ Report any new infestations of these invasive weeds to your local NRCS Office, Coronado RC&D, or the appropriate public land manager.

N. Levenez Ln

N. Dove Song Ln
N Ironwood Ln
W Century Dr
W Green Park Dr
W Mirasol Dr

UNION WEED

Terrace Dr
Linda Ln
Citrus Rd
W Stewart Rd
W Rice Rd
Cindy Way
Lark Dr
Wren Dr
Robin Dr
W Evani Ave

MALTA STAR THISTLE

**MESCAL
KNOWN LOCATIONS
OF INVASIVE PLANTS**

W Barrel Cactus Ln
W Ripple Rd
W Cypress Dr
W Verde Dr
Frontage Rd
N Mescal Rd
N Mountain View Rd
N Pineda Ln
N Evani Ave
N Ruth Rd
N Cherokee Trail
Tequila Bend
Patton Ln

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