

## Prospective New Agents for Biological Control of Yellow Starthistle.

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Six species of insects that attack yellow starthistle flowerheads have become established in California (Rees et al., 1996; Balciunas, 1998); however, they do not appear to be sufficient to control the plant in most parts of the state (Pitcairn et al., 1998; 2000). A rust pathogen (*Puccinia jaceae* var. *solstitialis*) was approved in 2003 for experimental release in California, and the first release was made last July by CDFA and ARS scientists. A weevil (*Ceratopion basicorne*) that develops inside the root crown of rosettes is being evaluated in quarantine. So far, it appears to be safe with respect to commercial crops such as artichoke and safflower and to native species of thistles and knapweeds. We expect to complete evaluation of plants on our test list (Table 1) and submit a petition this year requesting permission for release. Adults feed on the rosette leaves in late winter, larvae develop inside the root crown, and complete development by the time the plant bolts. This weevil is abundant in Turkey, attacking up to 100% of plants at a site, and many larvae can be found developing within one plant. A flea beetle (*Psylliodes* sp. nr. *chalcomera*) from southern Russia that develops in young stems has passed preliminary host specificity tests and will be studied further to see if it will be safe enough to release. Several other prospective agents are in early stages of evaluation, including: a blister mite (*Aceria solstitialis*), a lace bug (*Tingis grisea*), a rosette fly (*Botanophila turcica*), a seedhead weevil (*Larinus filiformis*), and fungal pathogens (*Synchytrium solstitiale* and *Phoma exigua*). Rapid progress to develop new agents is being accomplished through the efforts and cooperation of many scientists and a variety of institutions from many regions including California, Maryland, Montana, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey and Russia. The diversity of prospective agents greatly increases our chances of finding some that will greatly impact yellow starthistle populations in the U.S.

Table 1. List of plants to test for safety of prospective biological control agents of yellow starthistle

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**Family: Asteraceae**

**Subfamily: Cichorioideae**

**Tribe: Cardueae**

**Subtribe: Centaureinae**

*Acroptilon repens*

*Carthamus tinctorius* (safflower varieties: CW-88 OL, S-518 OL, S-730 L and others)

*Crupina vulgaris*

*Centaurea americana* (native), *Ce. calcitrapa*, *Ce. cineraria*, *Ce. cyanus*, *Ce. dealbata*, *Ce. diffusa*, *Ce. maculosa*, *Ce. melitensis*, *Ce. montana*, *Ce. rothrockii* (native), *Ce. solstitialis*, *Ce. sulphurea*, *Ce. virgata* var. *squarrosa*, *Ce. x pratensis*

Table 1. (continued)

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**Subtribe: Carduinae**

*Carduus pycnocephalus*

*Cirsium brevistylum*, *Ci. ciliolatum* (endangered CA), *Ci. cymosum*, *Ci. fontinale*, *Ci. hydrophilum*, *Ci. loncholepis*, *Ci. occidentale*, *Ci. pitcheri*, *Ci. rhotophilum*, *Ci. vinaceum*

*Saussurea americana*

*Cynara scolymus* (globe artichoke)

*Onopordum acanthium*

**Subtribe: Carlininae**

*Xeranthemum cylindraceum*

**Subtribe: Echinopsidinae**

*Echinops exaltatus*

**Tribe: Mutiseae**

*Leibnitzia lyrata*, or *Adenocaulon bicolor*, or *Trixis californica*

**Tribe: Lactuceae**

*Agoseris grandiflora*

*Stephanomeria* sp.

*Latuca sativa* (lettuce)

**Tribe: Vernoniaeae**

*Stokesia laevis*, or *Veronia fasciculata*

**Subfamily: Asteroidae**

**Tribe: Gnaphalieae**

*Antennaria parvifolia*, or *Gnaphalium californicum*

**Tribe: Anthemideae**

*Artemisia californica*, or *A. ludoviciana*

**Tribe: Senecioneae**

*Packera macounii*, or *Senecio vulgaris*

*Senecio multilobatus* (if available)

**Tribe: Eupatorieae**

*Liatris punctata*, or *Brickellia californica*

Table 1. (continued)

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**Tribe: Helenieae** (test 3 genera)

*Hemizonia*, or  
*Madira*, or  
*Eriophyllum*, or  
*Layia*, or

**Tribe: Heliantheae**

*Echinacea purpurea*  
*Helianthus annuus* (sunflower)  
*Tagetes patula* (French marigold)

**Tribe: Astereae**

*Aster biglovi*, or *A. chilensis*  
*Erigeron compositus*, or *E. linearis*

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