Yellowtuft Alyssum

Alyssum murale

Photo © Kurt Stueber

DESCRIPTION:
Leaves are covered with fine white hairs that give the plant a grayish green appearance. Yellow flowers are borne in clusters at the top of slender stalks that grow from 10 to 24 inches tall. Individual flowers are less than ¼ inch wide. They have four petals and six stamens. The flat-topped flower clusters may be several inches wide.

SIMILAR SPECIES:

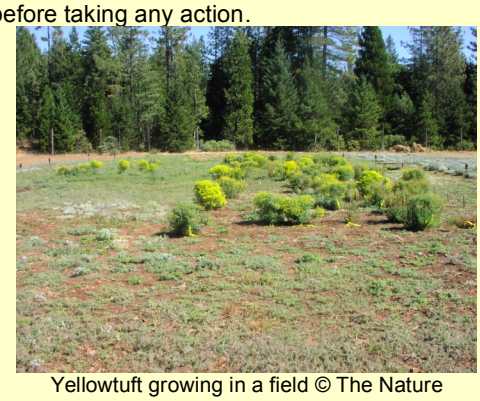
Please report all yellowtuft-like plants you find.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR
-bright yellow flowers
-leaves covered with fine white hair, giving a grayish green appearance

WHEN TO FIND YELLOWTUFT
Yellowtuft is easiest to find in late May when flowering.

WHERE TO FIND YELLOWTUFT:
You can find yellowtuft at The Nature Conservancy's Rough and Ready Creek Preserve where it is under an eradication program, and at a site near the Illinois Valley Airport. Areas to be on the lookout for yellowtuft include Rough and Ready Creek Botanical Area and other natural areas with serpentine soils.

WHAT TO DO:
Please report all sightings of *Alyssum murale* before taking any action.



Yellowtuft growing in a field © The Nature Conservancy

Alyssum murale, or yellowtuft, was introduced to North America from southern Europe. It is a member of the mustard family, and thrives in well drained, rocky soils.
Horticultural varieties are valued as an ornamental, especially for rock gardens. *A. murale* is also well-known as a "hyper-accumulator" plant meaning that it can take up metals like nickel and store them in its leaves, flowers and stems, thus providing an adaptation for growth on soils that otherwise might be toxic. Researchers are interested in using plants like *A. murale* as a natural means of decontaminating mining and other heavy metal sites – a process called bio-remediation. Because serpentine soils are commonly high in nickel, the Illinois Valley was chosen as an *Alyssum* bioremediation research site by USDA and a private company. Several plots of *A. murale* and a sister species, *A. corsicum* were planted around the valley for breeding and metal uptake trials. Now that the study is ending, it is important to make sure that this well-adapted non-native plant does not spread into natural areas.
In the spring be on the lookout for grayish green foliage, and by late May the bright yellow flowers are easy to see. The plant would most likely be found in area with rocky, serpentine soils. Removing yellowtuft from a site has been found to be quite difficult as it is produces many seeds, and can become established without soil disturbance. A comprehensive plan and treatment using various methods is needed to

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