

CANADA THISTLE



IDENTIFICATION: CANADA THISTLE (*Cirsium arvense*)

APPEARANCE: A creeping perennial that can grow 1 to 5 feet tall. Numerous flower heads are small and urn-shaped. Flowers are normally pink, but can be white to purple. Leaves are spiny with the underside often appearing white.

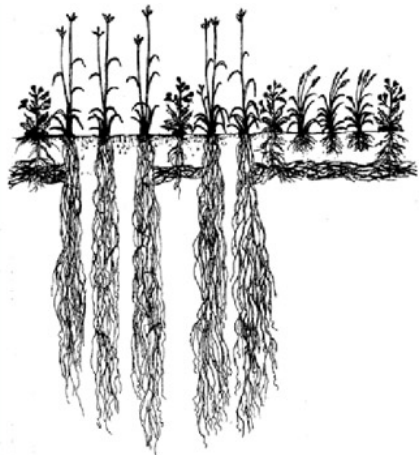
HABITAT: A native of Eurasia, it was brought into Canada in contaminated crop seed. It is found almost anywhere and it prefers rich, moist soils.

SEASON: Flowering occurs June through August. New plants grow from wind blown seed or from roots. Roots grow under the soil surface producing shoots that make new plants. Not all Canada thistle flowers produce seed. In fact, male and female flowers are usually on separate plants but both flowers will produce white plumes that blow through-out the countryside in the summer. Only plumes from pollinated female flowers will contain seeds. Seeds may germinate immediately, or remain in the soil until environmental conditions are favorable.

Using a variety of control methods is the key to a successful Canada thistle control program.

NON-CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- Cut flower heads to prevent the spread of seeds.
- Pulling and digging has been shown to be ineffective due to the plant's extensive root system. Cultivation can be effective if done at regular intervals, preferably every 21 days; this method needs to be repeated until the first killing frost. Mowing may be effective when done repeatedly at two week intervals over a period of several years.
- Overseeding with desirable grasses and fertilizing can improve the health of the soil and discourage weeds.
- Some biological control agents (diseases and insects) have been found to control Canada thistle to a limited extent. Insects can stop thistle from flowering certain years, and leaf rusts have reduced plant vigor. Research is continuing on biological control agents, but potential for control from these agents is limited at present.



CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- The most effective time for herbicide application is at the regrowth stage in the fall. The next best application time for most herbicides is during the spring at flowering/bud stage.
- There are many effective chemicals that are labeled for Canada thistle; however, this plant cannot be controlled with just one herbicide application. Seedlings will continue to emerge for many years.
- For more information please contact:

Kootenai County Noxious Weed Control

10905 N. Ramsey Road

Hayden, ID 83835

208-446-1290 / TTY 208-446-2145

kcnoxiousweeds@kcgov.us or www.kcweeds.com

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