



*Cirsium arvense*

WA – Class C Noxious Weed

OR – Class B Noxious Weed

## Canada Thistle

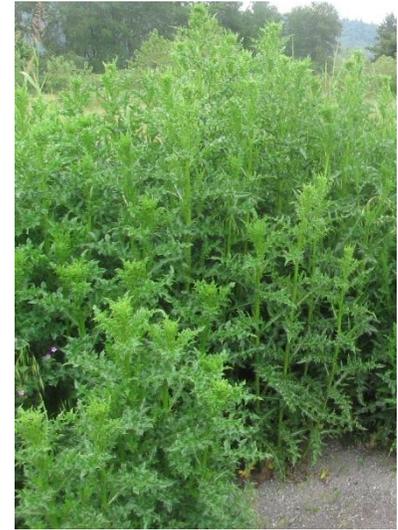
Canadian Thistle, Creeping Thistle

**Family:** Asteraceae

**Origins:** Native to Southeastern Europe and Asia. First introduced to North America in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**Range:** Found throughout the northern United States.

**Habitat:** Canada Thistle is commonly found in disturbed areas, roadsides, railway embankments, lawns, gardens, fields, and agricultural fields. It grows in a wide variety of soil types; clay loam, sandy loam, sandy clay. It grows poorly in the shade and wet soils.



**Impact:** Canada Thistle is an effective competitor for light, moisture, and nutrients. It quickly out-competes native species and can reduce crop yields in commercial crops and rangelands. It hosts several agricultural insects and disease pests such as sod-web worm, bean aphid, stalk borer, and the cucumber mosaic virus.



Canada Thistle reproduces by seed and vegetatively. Each plant can produce up to 5,300 seeds a year, which are easily dispersed by wind and can remain viable in the soil for 20 years. The highly successful vegetative propagation is carried on by the creeping horizontal roots that survive winters and continue to give rise to numerous aerial shoots. Each piece of root can also grow new plants.

**Description:** Canada Thistle is a perennial herb that grows 2 to 5 feet tall. The stem is light green, slightly ridged, and may have scattered hairs but is not usually spiny. Leaves are alternate, sessile, deeply lobed, and margined with stiff yellowish spines. Lower leaves are up to 2½ inches across and deeply lobed, with a spine at the tip of each lobe. The upper leaves are narrower and generally more toothed than lobed. Leaves may be somewhat hairy on the underside.

One plant typically has numerous flower heads, single or in small clusters at the ends of branching stems. Flower heads are ¾ inch across, and bloom lavender to pale pink or sometimes white from June to October. The bracts are flat, except for the tip, which peels back away from the flower head. The bract tips are pointed but not spiny and typically a purplish color.

**Common Look-Alikes:** Slenderflower Thistle, Italian Thistle.

*\*Not known to be toxic.*

## Integrated Pest Management - Control Methods

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) combines various methods such as mechanical, cultural, biological, and chemical controls to manage pests. IPM offers the possibility of improving the efficiency of pest control while reducing its negative environmental impacts. For more information, see the Cowlitz County Noxious Weed's IPM Resources & Strategy Guide or contact your local Noxious Weed Control Board to develop a customized IPM plan.

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## Non-Herbicide Control

<b>Mechanical</b> (pulling, cutting, digging, etc.)	Repeated tillage at 7 to 28-day intervals for about four months might be effective on mild infestations. Repeated mowing to weaken stems and prevent seeding is also effective in small infestations. This approach is most effective in late spring.
<b>Cultural</b>	Competitive crops, such as alfalfa and forage grasses, are very effective in controlling an infestation.
<b>Biological</b>	Many insects, a few nematodes, and the American Goldfinch have been reported to feed on various parts. Most of these do very little damage. The Canada Thistle Stem Gall Fly, <i>Urophora cardui</i> L. is the most promising. Eggs are laid in the terminal buds, and galls develop, which divert nutrients and stress the plant.

## Herbicide Control: Foliar Broadcast Treatment

<b>Aminopyralid</b> (Milestone)	<b>Timing:</b> Apply in spring to young plants before the bud stage; apply in fall to regrowth <b>Remarks:</b> Many desirable plants can be seriously injured or killed; using a non-ionic surfactant will help enhance control under adverse conditions; do not apply near the root zone of desirable trees; do not compost plant material that has been sprayed by this product; do not use manure from fields that have been sprayed with this product; do not apply near water.
<b>2,4-D</b> (Many Trade Names)	<b>Timing:</b> Apply during the early bud stage. <b>Remarks:</b> Annual treatments needed to control seedlings; avoid drift to sensitive crops; do not apply to grass or grain crops before tiller stage or early boot to dough stage; do not apply near water.
<b>Chlorsulfuron</b> (Telar)	<b>Timing:</b> Spring after flower buds have emerged; fall to rosettes. <b>Remarks:</b> Use on non-cropland only; do not apply to the frozen ground; maintain constant agitation while mixing the product with water; avoid contact with sensitive crops; do not treat powdery, dry soils and light, sandy soils if rain is not likely after treatment; refer to the label for use in aquatic areas.
<b>Glyphosate</b> (Rodeo, Killzall, Kleenup, Roundup)	<b>Timing:</b> Apply when thistles are actively growing but past the bud growth stage. Treatments must be made before the killing frost. <b>Remarks:</b> Spray complete uniform coverage, but not to the point of runoff; dust on plants may reduce effectiveness; Glyphosate is nonselective, it injures or kills any vegetation it contacts; refer to the label for use in aquatic areas.
<b>Clopyralid / Clopyralid + 2,4-D Amine</b> (Stinger, Transline / Curtail)	<b>Timing:</b> Apply to actively growing weeds after basal leaves emerge but before bud stage. <b>Remarks:</b> For most effective control, apply as a broadcast treatment to the entire infested area; consult the label for crop and livestock rotation restrictions before using these products; several crops may be injured up to four years after application; consult labels for registered use sites; do not apply near water.

\* Cowlitz County Noxious Weed Control Board does not endorse any product or brand name. Brand names are listed as an example only. Other commercial products may contain the listed active chemical for herbicide control. Always read and follow the safety protocols and rate recommendations on the herbicide label. **The Label is The Law.**

This control sheet includes excerpts from the Written Findings of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board (WSNWCB), [nwcb.wa.gov](http://nwcb.wa.gov). Herbicide information from the PNW Weed Management Handbook (ISBN 978-1-931979-22-1) and product labels.