



Carduus cinereus

WA – Class A Noxious Weed

OR – Class A Noxious Weed

Turkish Thistle

Spanish Thistle

Family: Asteraceae

Origins: Native to Turkey and east to the Himalayas. Turkish Thistle was documented in North America in 2007, but distinguished as a separate species from Italian Thistle in 2019.

Range: Documented in NE Oregon and nearby Idaho, with recent populations found in SW Washington.

Habitat: Commonly grows in rangeland, pastures, canyon grasslands, dry rocky slopes, and along seasonal streams.

Impact: Turkish Thistle quickly outcompetes native plants and other desirable forage plants. Larger infestations discourage grazing from native animals and livestock, and reduce the value of hay crops. With a very short life cycle between germination and flowering, Turkish Thistle presents a challenge for land managers in terms of finding and treating infestations in a timely manner. Turkish Thistle reproduces by seed; seeds can be spread by wind, water, animals or in soil relocated through recreation activities.

Description: Turkish Thistle is an annual that grows from a few inches tall up to four feet tall. The winged stems tend to be less robust than other thistles, are covered in woolly hairs, and can be unbranched or openly branched. Clusters of 1 to 5 narrow purple flowers grow on woolly, short (0-1 inch) stems. Flowers are compressed and non-spherical, blooming in the spring. Bracts underneath the flowers have hairs on the edges. Leaves are up to 4 inches long, attach directly to the stem, and reduce in size ascending the stem. Leaves have 2-5 lobes with spine tips, and are woollier on the underside of the leaf.

Common Look-Alikes: Turkish Thistle is often mistaken for Italian Thistle or Slenderflower Thistle. In fact, for a number of years Turkish Thistle was not known to be a distinct species from Italian Thistle. Unlike Turkish Thistle, Italian Thistle and Slenderflower Thistle flower heads do not grow on separate stems but cluster off of one. Italian Thistle and Slenderflower Thistle also tend to be more robust in stature.

* *Not known to be toxic.*



Images 2 & 3 from Mark Porter, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture.

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

Mechanical (pulling, cutting, digging, etc.)	Smaller populations can effectively be dug up, as the plant is not known to spread vegetatively. Continuous mowing may reduce the number of flowers and seeds produced, but is not recommended as a primary control method; eradication of Class A species is required.
Cultural	Maintain healthy competitive grasses and pasture plants by fertilizing and reseeding. Tilling can help reduce Turkish Thistle and maintain a healthy pasture. Cultural methods are not recommended as a primary control method; eradication of Class A species is required.
Biological	Grazing sheep or goats may be effective if timed appropriately. Turkish Thistle has a relatively short growing season in the spring. Due to the isolated nature of infestations in Cowlitz County, this is not a recommended method; eradication of Class A species is required.

Herbicide Control: Foliar Broadcast Treatment

Aminopyralid (Milestone)	Timing: Apply in spring to actively growing plants during the rosette or bolting stage; in the fall to rosettes if present. Remarks: 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.
Glyphosate (Rodeo, Killzall, Kleenup, Roundup)	Timing: Apply in early spring before the bud stage; in the fall to rosettes if present. Remarks: Spray complete uniform coverage, but not to the point of runoff; dust on plants may reduce effectiveness; Glyphosate is nonselective and may injure or kills any vegetation it contacts; refer to the label for use in aquatic areas.
MCPA Amine	Timing: Fall to control rosettes; spring before the flower stalk elongates. Remarks: Annual treatments needed to control seedlings; rosettes wider than 6 inches may be difficult to control; avoid drift to sensitive crops; do not apply near water.
Clopyralid (Transline, Stinger)	Timing: Apply to rosettes. Remarks: Product will injure or kill sensitive broadleaf forages; consult the label for crop rotation restrictions before use; several crops may be injured for several years after application; 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. Herbicide information from the PNW Weed Management Handbook (ISBN 978-1-931979-22-1) and product labels.