

Thistle Control

For More Information

Control of Canada, musk, and Scotch thistle impacts everyone. These thistles are not palatable to livestock, they are troublesome to recreationists, and they compete intensely with cultivated crops. These thistles are tremendously hardy plants. Controlling them requires persistence and an understanding of the plants and control methods.

Canada thistle cannot be controlled by hand pulling, digging, or tillage due to an extensive root system that is able to reproduce from fragmented roots. *Applying either Transline[®], Curtail[®], or Tordon 22K[®] (restricted use) during the rosette to prebloom stages can offer excellent control. Biocontrol is available and is having limited success.

Musk and Scotch thistle can be effectively controlled by persistent hand pulling, digging, or tillage prior to seed development. *Applying either Escort[®], Transline[®], Curtail[®], or Tordon 22K[®] can offer good to excellent control when applied during the rosette to prebloom stages. Biocontrol for these thistles is available and can be very effective in reducing populations.



Because regulations and methods change frequently, please contact your county weed department or Cooperative Extension office for the latest information concerning herbicides and biocontrol to use and how to apply them correctly.

UICWMA County Weed Department Offices

Bannock County	Pocatello, ID	(208) 251-0049
Franklin County	Preston, ID	(208) 852-0653
Oneida County	Malad, ID	(208) 776-3302
Box Elder County	Tremonton, UT	(435) 279-5258
Cache County	Logan, UT	(435) 716-8342

*Chemical recommendations are according to the *Montana-Utah-Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service 1999-2000 Weed Management Handbook*, Pgs. 214, 272, 273, 274.

Canada • Musk • Scotch THISTLE



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Canada Thistle

Canada thistle, *Cirsium arvense*, is a perennial native of southeastern Eurasia. Canada thistle typically begins actively growing by early to mid May. Rosettes are typically 6 to 10 inches across. Foliage is deep green and heavily spined. Purplish-pink or white flowers bloom from July through October. Canada thistle reproduces primarily through creeping rhizomes but also by way of windblown seed. Rhizomes spread underground forming close communities of Canada thistle plants. Healthy plants may attain heights of 1 to 5 feet.

Canada thistle commonly infests moist areas such as stream corridors, ditch banks, and irrigated pastures, as well as field edges, roadsides, gravel pits, idle fields, and other disturbed sites from low valleys to near timberline.



Musk Thistle

Musk thistle, *Carduus nutans*, is a biennial native of southern Eurasia. Rosettes sprouted the previous summer overwinter and begin actively growing by mid to late May. Rosettes may be 7 to 15 inches across. Dark green leaves are deeply lobed, heavily spined and have a prominent light colored midvein. Large, 1^{1/2} to 2 inch diameter, purple to rose colored flowers bloom in June through July. The flower stem is virtually free of spines for several inches immediately below the flower and the bloom "nods" off to the side. Reproduction is from windblown seed. Mature musk thistle plants may grow from 2 to 7 feet tall.

Musk thistle commonly infests pastures, rangelands, stream banks, roadsides, and waste areas from low valleys to alpine elevations.



Scotch Thistle

Scotch thistle, *Onopordum acanthium*, is a biennial native of Eurasia. Rosettes sprouted the previous summer overwinter and begin active growth in late April to mid May. First year rosettes may be 5 to 10 inches across. Second year rosettes may be from 1 foot to over 4 feet across prior to stem elongation. Basal leaves may be 2 feet long and 1 foot wide and have a prominent light midvein. Spines are found on leaves and stems. Large pinkish-purple flowers to bloom in June through July. Stems have dense hairs on them giving the plant a blue-green or greyish color. Stems are prominently winged or ridged. Mature plants will grow 2 to 8 feet tall. Reproduction occurs by windblown seed.

Scotch thistle commonly infests pastures, rangelands, field edges, roadsides, stream banks, and waste areas from low valleys to alpine elevations.

