



Deep Roots  
Greater Heights



Leaf



Male Flower



Female Flower

## Maple Ridge Noxious Weeds Program

### Canada thistle

(*Cirsium arvense*)

**Designation: Provincially Noxious**

#### History:

Introduced from Eurasia likely as a contaminant of crop seed as early as the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### How to Identify:

**Flowers:** Flower heads are white to purple, about 1 cm in diameter, borne on clusters of 1 – 5 at branch tips, and have a sweet vanilla scent. Flower bracts are spineless.

**Seeds:** One-seeded, pale yellow (straw) or light brown in colour; straight or slightly curved.

**Leaves:** 5 – 17 cm long, narrow, and alternate on the stem with crinkled, deeply lobed, and spiny edges. Base leaves are stalkless and clasping, or extended down the stem.

**Stem:** Mature plants range from 0.3 – 2.0 m in height.

**Location:** Canada thistle is found in almost every plant community over a wide range of elevations where there is soil disturbance or bare ground including roadsides, railway embankments, lawns, gardens, cultivated and non-cultivated fields, margins of forests, meadows, wetlands, and native plant communities.

**Mistaken Identity:** Often confused with other non-native thistles such as Bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), and Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*). Canada thistle can be differentiated from all similar species by the lack of spines on the main stem, small flowers, and height (less than 2 m tall).

#### Impacts:

**Economic:** Plants can crowd out forage grasses in pastures and rangelands, reducing yields and productivity.

**Ecological:** Single plants can spread rapidly (up to 5.5 m per season) and form dense patches, particularly in riparian areas, thus out-competing native plants.

#### Distribution in DMR:

Widespread but sporadic (low density).

#### Management:

##### Prevention:

- Monitor for Canada thistle in both disturbed and undisturbed areas.
- Ensure soil, gravel, and other fill material are not contaminated.
- Avoid unloading, parking, or storing equipment and vehicles in infested areas.
- Minimize soil disturbance during activities and revegetate exposed soil as soon as possible.
- Remove plants, plant parts, and seeds from personal gear, clothing, pets, vehicles, and equipment. Wash vehicles, including tires and undercarriage, and equipment at designated cleaning sites before leaving infested areas.
- Bag or tarp plants, plant parts, and seeds before transporting to a designated disposal site (e.g. landfill).
- Take special care when controlling Canada thistle near streams, or ditch lines, to prevent the movement of plant parts downstream.
- Maintain or establish healthy plant communities that are resistant to invasion by invasive plants.

##### Mechanical Control:

- Mowing is most effective when completed at the bud stage. Do not mow when in seed.
- Regular cutting or tillage can help wear down plant reserves, reduce plant growth, and reduce populations, but is not likely to kill the plant.

**Chemical Control:** Herbicides such as Milestone have been highly effective in controlling Canada Thistle. Always consult the product label and appropriate regulations when choosing a herbicide.

**Disposal:** If plants are cut prior to flowering, the plant material can be left on the site to decompose. If plants are cut post flowering, all plant parts, including flower heads, should be bagged and deeply buried at a landfill. Care should be taken to ensure that plant parts are not distributed during transport.

##### Restoration and Planting Alternatives:

Canada thistle is an uncommon garden species but is found in many disturbed areas. The best way to prevent the spread of noxious weeds is to eliminate new seedlings before they form a well developed root system. Plant newly disturbed areas with native species before the weeds have an opportunity to grow.



Photo: L. Scott



Photo: <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/publications/WesternFieldGuide.pdf>

#### Who Do you Call?

- 1) **REPORT PROHIBITED WEEDS** – Report-A-Weed: [www.reportaweedbc.ca](http://www.reportaweedbc.ca) 1-888-WEEDSBC
- 2) **DMR: 604-467-7363** — And see: <http://www.mapleridge.ca/714/Invasive-Plant-Species>

**Information and photos from:** T.I.P.S. datasheet for Canada Thistle; *A Guide to Weeds in British Columbia – Canada Thistle* [http://www.anpc.ab.ca/wiki/index.php/File:Cirsarve\\_3.jpg](http://www.anpc.ab.ca/wiki/index.php/File:Cirsarve_3.jpg); <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/publications/WesternFieldGuide.pdf> <http://iscmv.ca/target-species/species-profiles>