

Canada Thistle

Cirsium arvense

Description: Canada thistle is a highly aggressive perennial plant 2-5 feet tall with slender grooved stems that branch at the top. Leaves are alternate, oblong, and deeply lobed, with yellow spines along the whole leaf. Flower heads are $\frac{3}{4}$ inch across and purple to white in color. Flowers are single or grouped at the ends of the stems. Small brown seeds are dispersed by wind and are viable in the soil for 20 years. Roots have a wide horizontal spread, from which new plants can grow. It prefers moist soil but will grow in most sites.

Ecological Threat: Canada thistle invades natural areas with some disturbance present, as well as areas with fluctuating water levels such as streambanks and wet meadows. Once established it spreads quickly by replacing native plants. It grows in circular patterns, spreading by horizontal roots.

Control Methods:

Mechanical- Repeated pulling and mowing will weaken it. Mow when flower buds are just opening. Late spring burns are also effective if done in consecutive years.

Chemical- Spot application with glyphosate or other selective herbicides.

