



Ada County Pest of the Month

February
2015

**A quick guide to identifying and controlling
invasive plants and animals found in the county**

CANADA THISTLE



Canada thistle is an erect perennial plant with a rhizomatous root system that can reach as deep as 20 feet down and 15 feet across.

Canada thistle is an aggressive, creeping perennial weed that infests crops, pastures, rangeland, roadsides and noncrop areas. Generally, infestations start on disturbed ground, including ditch banks, overgrazed pastures, tilled fields or abandoned sites. Canada thistle reduces forage consumption in pastures and rangeland because cattle typically will not graze near infestations.

Leaves have irregularly lobed margins with spiny crinkled edges with bristles that irritate the skin.

Quick Facts:

Canada thistle begins to flower in late spring to early summer.

Each flower head produces about fifty seeds and an average stem bears twelve to fourteen flowers. Seeds in the soil can be viable for twenty years.

Plants grow 2 to 5 feet high and one plant can colonize an area 3 to 6 feet in diameter in one or two years.

Canada Thistle can mature and flower in as little as 2 months, and will exhibit numerous purple-lavender to off-white flowers at the ends of the stalks.

Seeds germinate best from late spring through autumn in regions with hot temperatures and minimal rainfall.

Canada thistle now grows in about thirty-seven countries around the world and is widespread throughout the United States and Canada.

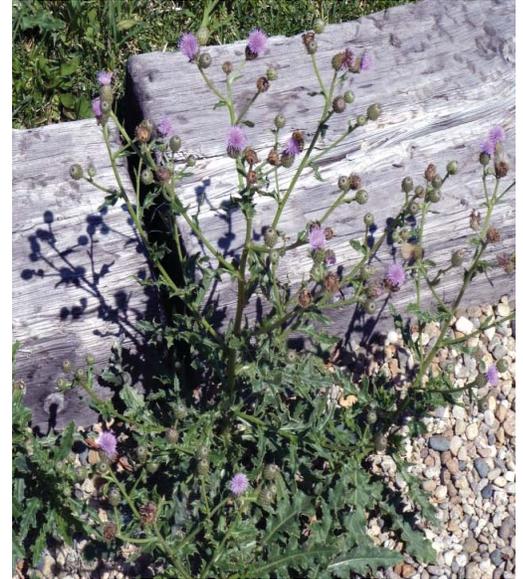


How to Control:

A combination of methods is most effective when infestations of Canada thistle occurs. Seed production and vegetative root propagation should be prevented by depleting the energy reserves in the long, creeping roots. Cutting, plowing, cultivating, and applying herbicides are common practices for depleting the energy reserves of Canada thistle roots.

Mechanical Control

Mowing hay meadows can be an effective tool if combined with herbicide treatments. Mowing alone is not effective unless conducted at one-month intervals over several growing seasons. Always combine mowing with cultural and chemical control. Mowing at hay cutting stimulates new Canada thistle shoots to develop from its root system.



Tillage is a more effective control measure than mowing. Repeated cultivation exposes thistle roots to drying or freezing and, more important, prevents the buildup of food reserves in the root system. To eradicate Canada thistle, top growth must be destroyed by cultivating every three weeks for the rest of the season. In many areas, this practice eliminates almost all of the plants.



Root system in early bud stage

Chemical Control

Large infestations of Canada thistle in small-grain fields, in pastures, and along roadsides and ditch banks can be controlled by applying 2,4-D, dicamba (Banvel), or MCPA. Annual treatments for two to three years will eliminate most of the thistle. Treatments are most effective in the early bud stage, when the plants are actively growing. Herbicides such as amitrole and picloram are also effective in controlling Canada thistle.

A common approach to chemical control of Canada Thistle is to use a combination of 2,4-D and Dicamba. In ornamental settings, a late spring herbicide treatment, followed by regular summer mowing and an early fall herbicide treatment offer the highest level of control possible with this product.

In agricultural settings, herbicide options that contain Chlopyralid and 2,4-D offer a greatly enhanced level of control compared to products containing Dicamba. **These products are labeled for some crops and pasture settings, and are selected on a case by case basis, as they are not labeled for, and should not be used on home lawns or gardens.**

Note: Chemical control of any weed can be difficult and confusing. If you are not experienced in chemical control or do not understand the product label, you should consult a licensed applicator to assist you. Inappropriate application can kill desirable vegetation, and may violate federal law.



For questions or concerns, please contact:

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