



June 2014

Ada County Pest of the Month

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

SCOTCH THISTLE



Scotch thistle is an erect biennial that grows up to 12 feet tall. Stems have broad spiny wings. Leaves are large and spiny. The majority of the plant surface is covered with grey hairs giving it a grey-green color. Rosette leaves are very large up to 2 feet long and 1 foot wide. It has a thick taproot and violet to reddish globe shaped flowers up to 2 inches in diameter. The flowers are in groups of 2 or 3 on branch tips covered with short fine cobweb hairs.

In the late 19th century Scotch Thistle was introduced as an ornamental plant and is now a serious noxious weed in the western United States. It is difficult to control because of its drought resistance and very prolific seed production. One plant can produce up to 40,000 seeds which can lay dormant for up to 20 years.

Quick Facts:

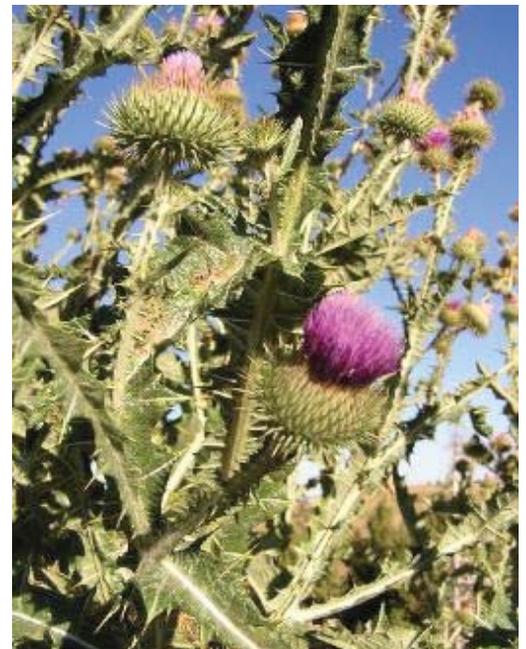
Scotch Thistle is the National Emblem of Scotland.

Scotch Thistle is native to Europe and Asia and is a member of the Sunflower family.

In the late 19th century, it was introduced to temperate regions of North America as an ornamental plant, and is now considered a major agricultural and wildland noxious weed.

The plant prefers habitats with dry summers, growing best in sandy clay and calcareous soils which are rich in ammonium salts.

A colony of Scotch Thistle can destroy a pasture, park or campsite. It can form a tall, dense wall creating an impenetrable barrier to humans and animals. The plant can eliminate forage use by livestock and some mammal species such as deer and elk.



How to Control:

Mechanical Control

Small infestations of Scotch Thistle may be physically removed or cut a few inches below the soil surface ensuring that no leaves remain attached to prevent regrowth. Mowing during early flowering will not kill the plant but will reduce seed production. Repeated treatments may be required because populations typically exhibit a wide range of developmental stages among individual plants. Slashing should be done prior to flowering since seed may mature in the seed head after cutting. Plants should not be mowed following seed set, as this increases chances for seed dispersal.

Chemical Control

Because of their shorter life cycle, Scotch thistle plants can be effectively treated with herbicides. All herbicide treatments should be applied at the rosette stage of the plant. Generally, herbicide applications would be in early spring or autumn. One of the primary difficulties in chemical control of Scotch thistles is their ability to germinate nearly year round. From autumn to spring a range of plant sizes can be found which may result in variable success from chemical control. Herbicides are very effective on seedlings and young rosettes, but control becomes more variable with increasing plant age.

A variety of products control Scotch thistle. See the timeline below for most effective herbicide use.



Herbicide Timeline:

Chlorsulfuron (Telar)	April through the end of July and September through November
Metsulfuron (Escort)	April through the end of July and September through November
Triclopyr + Clopyralid	April through the end of July and September through November
Clopyralid + 2,4-D	April through the end of July and September through November
Clopyralid (Transline)	April through the end of July and September through November
Picloram (Tordon)	September through November
Dicamba (Weedmaster)	April through the end of July and September through November
2,4-D	April through the end of July and September through November
Glyphosate (Roundup)	April through the end of July and September through November

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:

Ada County Weed, Pest and Mosquito Abatement

975 E. Pine . Meridian, Idaho 83642 . 208-577-4646 . weedandpest@adaweb.net