



Ada County Pest of the Month

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



Quick Facts



- **Name:** Scotch Thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*) other common names are Cotton Thistle ,Spear Thistle ,and Wooly Thistle
- **Found:** Rangeland, dry pastures, roadsides, railroad right of ways, rivers, streams, canals and disturbed sites
- **Briefly:** A member of the Sunflower family and also the National Emblem of Scotland. Legend tells of an invader who stepped on a flower, yelled in pain and alerted the Scotch army of the pending attack.

Identification

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.



How To Control



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! Small infestations may be controlled by cutting the taproot an inch or two below the soil surface ensuring no leaves are left attached to prevent plant re-growth.

More control methods continue on the next page

Control...Continued



Even removed plants with flowers can still go to seed when left on the ground. To reduce seed production, plants with buds or flowers should be collected and immediately disposed of or destroyed. Unless seeds are physically moved,

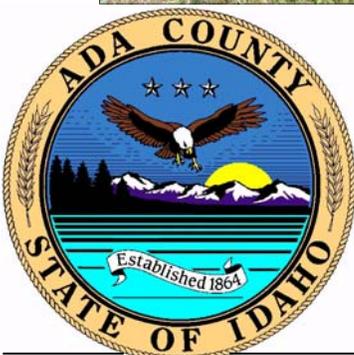


natural dispersal is not far from the parent plant. Therefore, controlling small isolated populations should be a top priority to prevent further spread of this weed. Herbicides are most effective in the rosette stage of plant growth. Scotch Thistle is a difficult plant to control and best if caught early. This plant can act as a living barbed wire fence making areas impassable for wildlife livestock and people.

** images courtesy of forestryimages.com **

If you find any Scotch Thistle, please call Ada County Weed Control and we will be happy to assist you develop a management plan for this noxious weed.

Idaho Governor C.L." Butch" Otter working with the Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign to control Scotch Thistle



For questions or concerns, please contact us:

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