

BENTON COUNTY WEED COMMISSION

Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)

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Canada Thistle is an invasive weed that is native to Europe and Asia. This is odd as many people believe that it originates in Canada due to its name. The plant now grows in 37 countries around the world and is widespread throughout the United States.

Canada Thistle is a perennial weed with roots that grow roughly 17 feet horizontally and 20 feet deep. This means that the plant persists from year to year. Controlling these plants is difficult. This thistle blooms between June and September and often reach heights of up to 5 feet.

Canada Thistle can grow in a variety of soils. This allows it to invade natural areas such as prairies, savannas, sedge meadows and wetlands. Invasions in these areas often result in native species being displaced and lower plant diversity.

Canada Thistle Quick Facts:

- Classification: Iowa Noxious Weed
- Life Cycle: Perennial
- Flower Color: Purple
- Height: 2 to 5 Feet
- Other Features: Spiny Leaves

Canada Thistle Control

Canada Thistle can easily invade grasslands and roadsides. When this occurs desirable vegetation is often outcompeted for resources resulting in large monocultures of this weed.

There are several ways to control Canada Thistle. Repeated mowing and pulling will weaken the roots. Mowing should be done when flower buds are just open to cause the most damage. Fire is also an effective means of control. Burns should be conducted in May/June and done consecutively for at least 3 years. Finally, spot applications of herbicide can kill this persistent weed. Some effective herbicides include glyphosate, clopyralid, metsulfuron and aminopyralid.

