



Canada thistle

Cirsium arvense



Canada thistle	
General	Family: Sunflower (Asteraceae) Introduced from Europe Colorado List B - Control required
Habitat	Herbaceous perennial Colony forming unisexual plants Found in cultivated fields, riparian areas, pastures, forests, lawns and gardens, roadsides, and in waste areas Control is difficult
PLANT	
Vegetation	Mature plants are 2-5 feet tall Leaves are 4-8 inches long, usually dark green with spiny serrated edges
Roots	Horizontal roots 15+ feet, growth is quick and plants can regenerate from small pieces Vertical roots 6-15 feet
Flower	June-August Color: Purple, pink or white Buds are 3/4 inch wide, 1 inch long
Seed	Can be viable eight to ten days after flowering Germinate late May through early fall Can remain dormant in soil for up to 20 years
Seedling	April or May. Rosettes start to appear around mid-April and continue through the summer
Reproduction	Seed Horizontal and vertical roots - Root propagation is the main source of new plants

CONTROL -- CHEMICAL		
Timing	Herbicide	Notes
Spring or Fall – Rosette	2,4-D (various) Aminocyclopyrachlor + Chlorsulfuron (Perspective) Aminopyralid (Milestone) Clopyralid (various) Dicamba (various) Glyphosate (various) Metsulfuron (Escort XP) Picloram (Tordon) Restricted Use	Use of a surfactant is recommended for most herbicides to help increase contact with the vegetation and to facilitate herbicide uptake. Refer to the specific label for the appropriate type of surfactant. Treating at the rosette and younger growth stages stops weeds from using resources that desirable plants need to prosper. Refer to the individual label for allowed sites, specific timing, and restrictions about grazing and haying. Formulations with more than one active ingredient are available. Control will take a few years so treatment will need to be repeated.
Spring to Early Summer Rosette to Pre-bud or Early flowering Fall – all stages	2,4-D (various) Aminocyclopyrachlor + Chlorsulfuron (Perspective) Aminopyralid (Milestone) Chlorsulfuron (Telar) Clopyralid (various) Dicamba (Banvel) Glyphosate (various) Metsulfuron (Escort XP) Picloram (Tordon) Restricted Use	
CONTROL -- NON-CHEMICAL		
Technique	Timing	Method
Biological	Summer to Fall	Canada thistle rust fungus (<i>Puccinia punctiformis</i>)
Burning	Not recommended	Not effective but may improve grass growth, which may act as competition. Burning may not be allowed so check with your local fire protection district for current restrictions.
Cultivation	Not recommended	Cultivation severs the roots which will regrow plants from the fragments.
Grazing	Not recommended	Livestock avoid the plants because of the spiny leaves.
Mowing	Spring to Early Fall	Repeat monthly for each flush of plants prior to seed set followed up in the fall with herbicide after last flush of plants are 12-18 inches tall.
Prevention	Anytime	Maintain the health of the site by encouraging healthy stands of grass.
Removal	Not recommended	Hand pulling is not effective. Pulling perennial weeds with deep or spreading roots breaks the roots. New plants grow from the fragmented pieces and can increase an infestation.
	Spring to Fall Flowering	Bolting and flowering plants may be clipped near the base. Place the cut plants into trash bags and place them in the trash or take to the landfill. If done when plants are small, it results in less bulk. Repeat monthly and follow up in the fall with herbicide treatment. Do not pull established plants because they will resprout from root fragments.

Use all chemicals according to the manufacturer's label. The label will provide specific instructions including allowed sites, application methods, rates, storage, re-entry requirements and personal protective equipment. No specific recommendation or endorsement is made or implied by listing the above methods or products. 9/2021