

Canada Thistle



Is a herbaceous perennial plant growing 30–100 cm, forming extensive clonal colonies from an underground root system that sends up numerous erect stems each spring, reaching 1–1.2 m tall (occasionally more). Stems are green smooth and glabrous (having no Trichome or glaucousness), mostly without spiny wings. The stems often lie partly flat by summer but can stay erect if supported by other vegetation. The leaves are very spiny, lobed, up to 15–20 cm long and 2–3 cm broad (smaller on the upper part of the flower stem). The inflorescence is 10–22 mm diameter, pink-purple, with all the florets of similar form (no division into disc and ray florets). The seeds are 4–5 mm long, with a feathery pappus which assists in wind dispersal. The plant also spreads underground using rhizomes.

Cutting at flower stem extension before the flower buds open to prevent seed spread. Repeated cutting at the same growth stage over several years may "wear down" the plant.

Bio Control:



The Canada thistle stem weevil, **Ceutrohynchus litura** eats away the inside of the stem when it is a growing larvae, and then it eats a hole near the bottom of the stem, this lets other insects in to finish the job of destroying the plant. The adults do not do much of the impact, they just eat parts of the leaf and stem.



Urophora cardui Fly larvae impact plant vigor in Canada thistle by inducing the plant to divert energy away from root and flower production to produce gall* tissue in stems. Growth and flowering can be retarded, but this agent alone does not kill plants or prevent spread.



Larinus planus will lay its eggs by drilling a hole into an unopened bud. Once they hatch, the larvae will start eating the tissue part of the seed. They will then develop into the pupa stage. The most damaging stage is the larval stage. This is where the bud is ruined, and therefore the bud will fail to open all the way. In the end, the thistle has trouble reproducing.

Control in cropping systems can be difficult depending on the crop, as it aggressive spreads by root when it is continually cropped. There are some herbicides labeled for use in particular crops against Canada thistle, but only seem to be moderately effective at controlling it over the long term. Roundup herbicide is moderately effective to help renovate infested fields. Healthy stands of alfalfa can compete against it.

Herbicidal control in range or pasture settings can be effective, however, repeated applications may be necessary making constant monitoring and management a must. Consult the District to find out which product(s) will be suit your particular needs.

Canada thistle is widely distributed across Johnson County and the State of Wyoming.