

Bull Thistle

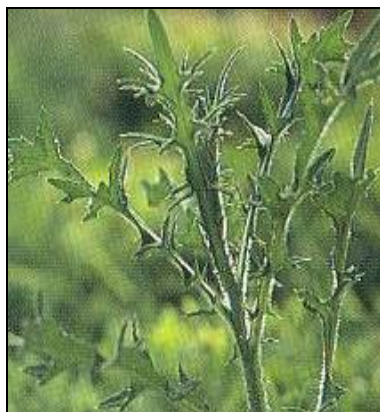


Left:
Bull thistle

Below:
Canada thistle



Bull thistle and Canada thistle are often mistaken for each other at this stage of growth



Bull thistle is a biennial weed that reproduces by seeds. A member of the Asteraceae family, this weed has a short, fleshy taproot and the stems are stout, erect and hairy, growing 2 to 5 feet tall, bearing many spreading branches.

The first year rosette has green leaves, which are slightly indented, lance-shaped and are woolly and grayish on the underside with spines on the margins. The second year leaves are lobed, hairy and prickly on the upper side and cottony underneath. Each lobe has 3 or 4 points that end in a sharp, long yellow spine. The leaves extend down the stem in spiny wings.

The dark-purple flowers are clustered at the ends of the branches, typically 1 to 3 per stalk. Involucral bracts surround each flower with sharp, yellow-tipped spines. Flowering occurs from July through September.

The seeds are tipped with a long, white hairy plume which moves along the ground and in the air making Bull thistle a highly competitive weed that infests pastures, roadsides and disturbed sites.

Control Measures:

Mechanical: Bull thistle will not withstand regular cutting or tillage; if cut while in flower, be sure to bag and dispose of the flower heads.

Cultural: Good vegetative cover helps slow down the establishment of this weed, but it can still invade healthy stands including healthy lawns.

Chemical: Bull thistle can be controlled with selective herbicides, being sure to add a surfactant to the spray mix to help the chemical penetrate the hairy leaf surface.

Herbicides such as 2,4-D, WeedMaster or Milestone should be applied in the spring, while the plant is actively growing. Tordon can be applied anytime during the growing season. If there is fall regrowth, adequate control can be achieved with any of the above-mentioned herbicides.

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For Additional Information on Noxious Weeds, their Control and the State Weed Law, Visit our Website:

www.spokanecounty.org/weedboard

Read and follow all label instructions when applying herbicides. Trade names have been used to simplify instructions and no endorsement or warranty is expressed or implied.