



## SCOTCH THISTLE (*Onopordum achanthium*)

Family: Asteraceae (Aster)

Life Cycle: Biennial

Class: B - Control Required

AKA: Cotton or Woolly thistle

Spokane County Noxious Weed Control Board · [www.SpokaneCounty.org/WeedBoard](http://www.SpokaneCounty.org/WeedBoard)  
509-477-5777 · 222 N Havana St, Spokane WA 99202 · @spokanenoxiousweeds

SCOTCH THISTLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plant is covered in cottony hairs, giving it a gray-green appearance</li> <li>May grow eight feet tall and six feet wide</li> <li>Large stands exclude livestock and wildlife from accessing heavily infested areas.</li> <li>Native to Europe and Western Asia</li> </ul>

CONTROL METHODS
<p><b>Mechanical:</b> Digging can be effective in small patches. Sever root below the soil surface. Repeated mowing can reduce seed production if done just before flowering begins. Mow again when more flowering stalks develop. Tillage will control growing plants but may expose new seeds, causing a flush of germination. Repeat tilling as needed.</p> <p><b>Cultural:</b> Sheep may graze on small rosettes and goats may eat flowering heads, but grazing is not very effective. Promote competitive desirable vegetation; perennial grass communities can inhibit scotch thistle establishment.</p> <p><b>Biological:</b> There are currently no biological agents approved for release in Washington State.</p> <p><b>Chemical*:</b> Most effective when treated in rosette stage. Use a surfactant. See table below.</p>

DESCRIPTION
<p><b>Growth Traits:</b> Biennial, grows large basal rosette in first year, developing flowering stalks in the second year. Stems branch to form a broad, tall, plant.</p> <p><b>Leaves and Stems:</b> Covered in cottony hair, making plants look gray-green. Leaves may be two feet long and one foot wide, and have sharp yellow spines. Branching stems have vertical spiny wings that go up to the base of flowerheads.</p> <p><b>Flowers:</b> Flowers June - August. Flower heads may be solitary or in groups on branch tips. Globe shaped flowers bloom dark pink to purple and are typically one to three inches in diameter. Long spiny bracts surround the base of flower heads.</p> <p><b>Roots and Reproduction:</b> Fleshy taproot develops in first year as rosette grows. Reproduces by seed, with each plant producing 8,000 to 40,000 seeds. Seeds are plumed, and primarily spread by wind. Seeds contain a water soluble germination inhibitor which keeps seeds in dormant stage until soil is saturated, typically in spring or fall. Seeds viable 7-39 years in soil.</p> <p><b>Habitat:</b> Prefers habitats with dry summers, and grows best in sandy or calcareous soils. Disturbed areas along water corridors, roadsides, trails, rangeland, pasture, forest clearings and abandoned/vacant land are prone to invasion. Forms dense stands.</p> <p><b>Toxicity:</b> Not known to be.</p>

**\*ALWAYS read herbicide labels and follow instructions for use and PPE.** The use of a surfactant (aka sticker) increases the efficacy of herbicide application, saving you time and money. If treating over multiple seasons, rotate using herbicides with different modes of action to reduce likelihood of herbicide resistance developing. Below are recommended herbicides based on stage of growth and time of year. All recommendations are supplied with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Noxious Weed Board is implied. Trade names are used to simplify recommendations.

**NOTE:** There is no 'magic bullet' in noxious weed control, and control efforts must be repeated every season to stop their spread. Using a combination of methods (e.g. cultural and chemical) will lead to better control over time.

April - May Rosette, Seedling Stage	June - July Bolting, Bud, Bloom Stage	August - October Seeding, Fall Rosette
2,4-D	Tordon + 2,4-D	Tordon + 2,4-D
Telar	Transline	<b>Fall rosettes:</b>
Prescott	Escort	WeedMaster
Range Star		Roundup
Milestone		