

Weed of the Month: Canada Thistle



Welcome to our "Weed of the Month" feature, designed to raise awareness about the impact of noxious invasive weeds on our environment. This month, we're focusing on Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), an aggressive plant species that poses a significant threat to native ecosystems and agricultural lands.



Top Left- Adult Canada Thistle flower head.

Middle Right- Canada Thistle flower head and buds.

Identification:

Canada Thistle is a perennial that is found scattered throughout California. It produces purplish-lavender or white flower heads with a green pineapple-shaped bud. Its flower heads range from a half inch to an inch across. Its leaves are very spiny and lobed, growing up to eight inches long and one inch wide. Canada Thistle also exhibits smooth to slightly hairy stems.

Invasive Behavior:

Originating from Europe and the Mediterranean region, Canada Thistle has become very invasive to many parts of North America. It thrives in a variety of habitats, including open and disturbed sites such as roadsides, gardens, pastures, hillsides, rangelands, and stream banks. It has a blooming period of June to September and reproduces by seed and vegetatively from rhizomes.



Impact:

The presence of Canada Thistle can have serious ecological and economic consequences. The plant competes aggressively with native plant species. It can cause extensive yield loss in crops by competing for water, nutrients, and light. Canada Thistle also reduces productivity in pastures because livestock avoid grazing areas it inhabits. Its harsh leaves can cause increases in infections due to abrasions formed on livestock posing concern to ranchers.



Bottom Left- Canada Thistle seeds.





Control and Management:

Consistency when removing Canada Thistle from a targeted area is vital to a successful eradication process. Being that its stems die back over the winter and form new shoots in the spring it is important that they are treated during the growing season. It does not spread very far from the parent plant but animals such as birds and some small mammals can consume and disperse the seed. One mechanical method that can be used for eradication is mowing. While performing this practice, it must be completed every three to four weeks over multiple growing seasons for long-term success.

Top Left- Canada Thistle rosette.

Bottom Right- Close up image of Canada Thistle leaflets.

Prevention:

Preventing the spread of Canada Thistle is key to its control. Routinely inspect and maintain your property for any signs of this invader. Be vigilant for any signs of this weed in your area and report sightings to the Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at **(530) 822-7500**.

By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Canada thistle and protect our native ecosystems. Join us next month for a new "Weed of the Month" feature, where we'll highlight another noxious invasive plant and share tips on how to address it.

For more information about Canada Thistle, feel free to visit the University of California Statewide IPM Program (UC IPM) website at:

https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/WEEDS/canada_thistle.html

For more information about our other county programs, visit our website at:

<https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/agricultural-department>



Thank you for your dedication to preserving our environment and agricultural land!

- Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner's Office

