

Plumeless thistle

Carduus acanthoides L.

Sunflower Family

Key identifying traits

- ❑ Abundant upper branching gives "top heavy" appearance to mature plants or old dead plants
- ❑ Spiny wings extend entire length of stems, right up to flower heads
- ❑ Flowers about 1 inch across and purple (generally)
- ❑ Bracts surrounding the flower are narrow, appearing as sharp spines
- ❑ Stem leaves are alternate and blend into stems
- ❑ Older rosettes have deeply lobed, wavy leaves with yellow spines along white leaf margins

Biology and ecology

- A winter annual or biennial with a tap root
- Reproduces by seed only
- Found in pastures, fields and roadsides
- Mature plants normally grow 3-6 feet tall but are known to grow as tall as 8 feet in our area
- Flowering occurs June to August
- Can dominate sites to exclusion of livestock
- Can hybridize with Musk thistle

Control

Prevention - Learn to identify plants; know your property; beware of fill dirt, hay and seed from outside your area

Biological - Some established and effective in the county reducing seed production and plant density

Cultural - Good vegetative cover tends to inhibit establishment but it can invade healthy sites

Mechanical - Regular cultivation, digging or cutting are effective because of seed only spread

Chemical - Several effective at label rates when applied at vegetative stage either in the first or second year of lifecycle (spring/fall)

Where found – Large infestations occur in valleys and along roads in the northern half of Stevens County with small outbreaks south of Highway 20.

