

Have you seen this invasive plant?

Scotch thistle is a large biennial that can form dense thickets in pastures and rangelands.

Learn more at www.nwcb.wa.gov



Plants occasionally grow as annuals. Seeds sprout and form rosettes. Leaves are covered in cotton-like or woolly hairs, have lobed edges with yellowish spines, and can be up to 2 feet long and 1 foot wide.

Stems grow from the rosettes, branching 8 feet or more in height and 6 feet wide. Each has vertical rows of prominent, spiny ribbon-like leaf material or “wings” that extend to the base of the flowerheads.



Dense infestations can exclude native plants and reduce forage production.



Flowerheads at stem tips are up to 2 inches in diameter, with long, stiff, needle-like bracts at the base. Flowers range from dark pink to purple.

Why is Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*) a noxious weed?

- Scotch thistle forms dense stands of large, spiny plants that exclude animals from grazing and access to water.
- Plants can spread quickly, producing 8,000 to 40,000 seeds per plant. Seeds are dispersed by wind, water, people, and animals.

Where do you find Scotch thistle?

- Scotch thistle is common in areas of eastern Washington and is occasionally found in western Washington. Plants grow in wet meadows and pastures as well as dry pastures, rangelands, and along streams and rivers.

What can you do?

- Learn to identify this Class B noxious weed - do not confuse it with the native wavy-leaf thistle (*Cirsium undulatum*).
- Control plants before seed production. Methods include digging plants by cutting below the root crown, carefully timed mowing (though further control may be needed), and herbicide. Establish healthy plant communities to help prevent infestations.
- Report any sightings to your county noxious weed control board or to noxiousweeds@agr.wa.gov.



Washington
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