

Canada thistle

The problem

Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) is a noxious weed and has been recognized as a problem weed since the late 1700's. Its impact is widespread in cultivated fields, hay crops, pastures and rangelands, non-crop lands, forests and banks of waterways. Canada thistle causes serious yield losses in many field and horticultural crops. Severe infestations have been reported to cause yield losses as high as 50% in corn, 60% in wheat and up to 70% in potatoes. Control of this weed is legislated in many provinces due to its serious impact on agricultural crops.

Canada thistle is a patch-forming perennial that spreads by underground roots and buds on emerging stems, by seed and by mechanical spread in soil. The seed spreads in flowing water, as contaminants in crop seeds, on equipment and recreational vehicles and by wind dispersal.

What to look for

Some key characteristics to differentiate Canada thistle from other thistle and sow-thistle species:

- Canada thistle forms large patches, with all stems part of one plant. The mature stems range from 0.3 to 1.5 m tall.
- Canada thistle has spreading roots (rhizome-like) that connect emerged stems underground. Dense patches of other thistle species will not be connected underground.
- Canada thistle has smooth leaves with a wavy surface and spines along the edge of the leaves and clasping bases with no petioles. The oblong-shaped leaves are variable and can be entire or with irregular lobes. Many other thistles have spines or hairs on the leaf surface.
- Canada thistle forms in a rosette in early spring. The leaves on young Canada thistle shoots resemble mature leaves at the time of flowering.
- Canada thistle plants have numerous, pinkish-purple, fragrant flowers, 10 to 20 mm across that are not spiny.

In non-cultivated areas, mowing twice a year can reduce light infestations, especially when combined with herbicide control. Repeated cultivation can reduce light stands, but new plants may emerge from the cut-up root sections in heavier stands or from roots located below the cultivated area.

Envu solutions

Notes for herbicide control

Apply herbicides to fully emerged foliage, at bud to bloom, and before hard frost in the fall while leaves are still green. Retreatment may be required for newly emerging shoots where roots have not been controlled or have been chopped up by site preparation or disturbance.

The benefit of herbicides with residual control is to prevent germination of seedlings after treatment. Cleaning equipment after herbicide application within a site, mowing, ditching or any work on infested sites is critical to prevent linear spread down rights-of-way. For cleaning protocols for contractors: https://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Clean-Equipment-Protocol_June2016_D3_WEB-1.pdf

After control, establishment of competitive cover is important to prevent new infestations.



Sturgeon County



Sturgeon County

Application type	Solution	Rate	Application timing
Post-emergent selective weeding range and pasture	Navius® FLEX	167 g/ha	Weeds actively growing mid-May thru mid-September

For more information about effective vegetation management, contact your Envu representative or visit ca.envu.com.

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