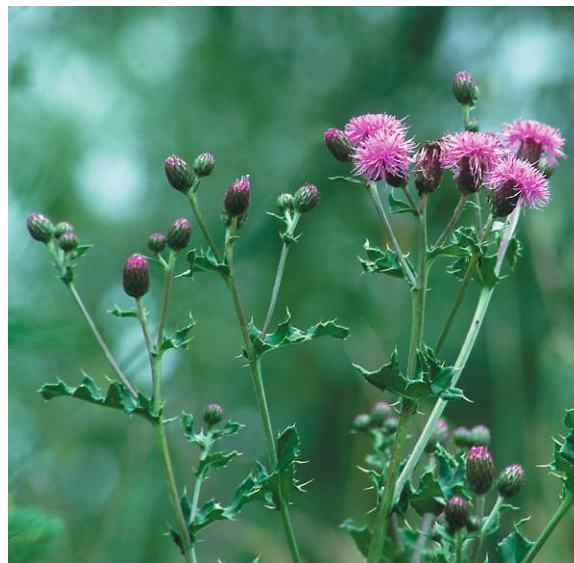


## **DD. Canada Thistle** (*Cirsium arvense*)

### **Key Characteristics:**

Canada thistle is a member of the Sunflower family. It is a perennial which reproduces by seeds and fleshy, **horizontal roots**. The erect **stem** is hollow, mostly smooth, and reaches 1 to 5 feet tall, branching at the top. The lower stem is covered with fine hairs. Flowers are typically pale pink to lavender, sometimes purple.



### **Locations:**

Canada thistle emerges in June in most parts of Pitkin County. It is one of the most widespread and economically damaging noxious weeds in Colorado. Infestations are found in cultivated fields, riparian areas, pastures, rangeland, forests, lawns and gardens, roadsides, and in waste areas. Because of its prolific seed production, vigorous growth, and extensive underground root system, control is difficult. Canada thistle is best managed through an integrated management system that emphasizes competitive desirable plants.

### **Biological control:**

Cattle, goats, and sheep will graze Canada thistle when plants are tender in the Spring.

There are also currently several insects available for Canada Thistle control:

- **Canada Thistle Stem Mining Weevil** (*Ceutorhynchus litura*) attacks the stem of young Canada Thistle plants as they emerge from the soil and begin to elongate.
- **Canada Thistle Flower Weevil** (*Larinus planus*) feeds on flower heads.
- **Defoliating Beetle** (*Cassida rubiginosa*) eats the leaves of Canada, Musk, Plumeless Thistles.

### **Cultural control:**

Maintain soil disturbances, and encourage desirable plant growth.

### **Mechanical control:**

Canada thistle is very difficult to mechanically control because each time a root is cut, it serves to increase the number of plants; regular cutting or tillage can wear down plant reserves and reduce population and vigor but results are often erratic.

### **Chemical control:**

Appropriate timing is critical for effective chemical control of Canada Thistle. Application at bud stage or in the fall after a light frost allow for best translocation of herbicide to the plants' extensive root system. Contact Pitkin County Land Management Department for more specific information about herbicide products, application rates, and equipment calibration.

### **Native Look-Alikes:**

There are several Native Thistles in Pitkin County which may be confused with Canada Thistle. See Appendix B for more information about Native Thistles.