

## GG. Scotch Thistle

(*Onopordum acanthium*; *O. tauricum*)

### Key Characteristics:

Scotch thistle is a member of the Sunflower family. A biennial, it leaves as a **rosette** in its first year and can have leaves up to 2 feet long and 1 foot wide.

**Leaves** are blueish- or grayish-green, toothed, and spiny. The second year the plant can grow up to 8 feet tall, with a **stalk** that has broad spiny wings. The entire plant is finely hair to woolly. There are 2-3 large, globe-shaped magenta **Flowers** per branch tip, with spiny, needle-like bracts below.

### Locations:

Scotch thistle is abundant in Garfield and Eagle Counties, but relatively rare in Pitkin County. Plants have been found in the Town of Snowmass Village and along Emma, Lower River, and Capitol Creek Roads.

### Cultural control:

Competitive vegetation helps limit spaces open to invasion.

### Biological control:

The **Thistle Stem Gall Fly**, *Urophora stylata*, is used to help control this thistle. Females lay eggs on the seed-head. The maggot then consumes the seed in the flower. This species has over-wintered in Colorado, but the limited numbers will not allow for general redistribution. For more information contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture Insectary in Palisade.

### Mechanical control:

Mowing can stop seed production in short term, but plants can re-grow; digging, cutting and cultivation are effective; monitor for new growth all season long; seed bank will be present for 2-4 years.

### Chemical control:

The best timing for chemical control is when plants are in the rosette or early bud stages. Effective control may require applications in both the spring and fall. 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.

