

"A Rated Weed"

Please call 1-866-Invader if you suspect you have found this species

Turkish thistle
Carduus cinereus

Other common names: no known

USDA Symbol: CACI
ODA rating: A



Introduction: Turkish thistle is a native of the Irano-Turanian Region which extends from Turkey east to the Himalayas. It has only recently been documented in North America (2007) with its known distribution limited to the Snake River Canyons of NE Oregon and East Central Idaho. The plant is closely related to Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*) and was misidentified as such until 2014. Careful botanical scrutiny and genetic profiling since have led to its identification as a unique species of the genus *carduus*.

Distribution in Oregon: To date all known infestations are located within the back country of Hells Canyon National Recreation Area in Wallowa County. Sites occur in some of the most rugged and remote locations of North Eastern Oregon. It is not known how the plant was introduced in Oregon.

Description: Turkish thistle is one of three annual thistles in the *Carduus* genus that has non-spheric flower buds. Turkish thistle has loose arrangement of flowers with each flower often having its own stem. Comparably Italian and slender flower thistles have tight groups of flowers that often attach directly to the main stem. Uniquely, Turkish thistle has hair on the edges of the bracts on the flower buds, whereas the bract edges are not hairy in the other species in the US.. Turkish thistle is an annual that can flower at 3" tall but can also grow up to 4' tall depending on site conditions. This plasticity may allow the plant to take advantage of multiple environmental conditions; assuring seed production in dry years and then maximizing seed production when conditions are favorable. Seed viability is unknown but other *Carduus* seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to 18 years. It is presumed not to reproduce vegetatively. Hybridization does occur within the *Carduus*. This raises concern that hybrids of Turkish thistle with other *carduus* thistles are possible. Hybrids may express different characteristics and be able to utilize habitats differently than their parents can.

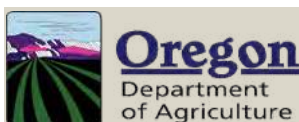
Impacts: Turkish thistle spreads easily on its own in Oregon and competes with native vegetation potentially out competing native plant species which could thereby impact food supplies for grazers and browsers and/or change habitat structure and function. Manual or chemical treatments would likely be necessary to control the spread of Turkish thistle, which can be expensive. Pasture and hay crops could become contaminated by Turkish thistle making the crop of lower value.

Biological controls: Despite seed feeding weevils observed in times past and releases of *T. horridus* in 2010, biocontrol agents have shown little to no establishment. Infestations will continue to be monitored for agent presence but future control efforts should focus on methods of eradication.



Updated 2020

State of Oregon Department of Agriculture OR 020



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