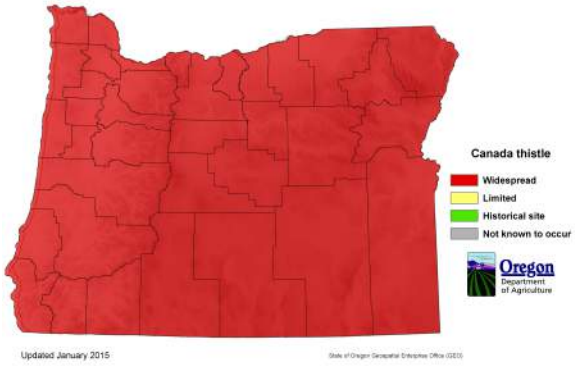
"B" Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant, but may have limited distribution in some counties

Canada thistle
Cirsium arvense

Other common names: Californian thistle, Canadian thistle, creeping thistle, field thistle

USDA symbol: CIAR4
ODA rating: B



Introduction: Canada thistle is a native of southeastern Eurasia and Europe and was accidentally introduced to the US starting in the early 1600s. Multiple introductions over the centuries have been linked to imported grains. It is the most common weedy thistle found in the U.S.

Distribution in Oregon: Canada thistle occurs in every county in Oregon.

Description: Canada thistle is classified as a creeping perennial. Plants are either all male or all female. Its leaves are wavy, margined to lobed, up to 6 inches long and armed with yellowish spines. It has small purple to white flowers that are born in clusters. It sports an extensive horizontal-spreading root system enabling the plant to create dense patches. Fragmentation of the root system during tillage aids in dispersal throughout a field creating headaches for farmers. It has large seed production but a low percentage of viable seeds.

Impacts: Canada thistle can be found in cultivated fields, riparian areas, pastures, rangeland, forests, lawns, gardens, roadsides, and waste areas. Poor weed control can result in crop reductions up to 25% in heavily infested ground. It is the most common and impacting thistle species in the U.S.

Biological controls: Four approved biocontrol agents, a stem weevil, a seed head weevil, a crown weevil, and a stem gall fly are established in Oregon

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www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Weeds/Pages/Default.aspx

Photos by Eric Coombs, Glenn Miller, ODA archives