

# SCOTCH THISTLE

*Onopordum acanthium*  
Asteraceae, the sunflower family  
Category: Containment

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## FACTSHEET INFORMATION

### Summary of Invasiveness

- Scotch thistle has the potential to compete with plant and animal species by forming dense stands that decrease biodiversity in areas of introduction.
- It can cause injury to livestock and wild animals due to its sharp spines.

### Description

- Erect biennial that grows up to 8 feet tall.
- Leaves are spiny, alternate, toothed to shallowly lobed and can grow up to 2 feet long in the rosette stage.
- Stems and leaves are covered with hairs giving it a blue-green appearance.
- Branched stems have vertical rows of prominent, spiny, ribbon-like leaflets or wings.
- Flower heads are purple, globe-shaped, and up to 2 inches in diameter with stiff, spiny bracts.
- Ridged, egg-shaped achenes are deep brown to black.

### Introduction and Movement

- Native to Europe and is thought to have been introduced as an ornamental plant in the late 19th century and unintentionally as seed contaminant in livestock feed.
- The plant can tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions and inhabits pastures, rangelands, and agricultural fields.
- Seeds can travel long distances by hitching a ride on fur, wool, fabric, footwear, and motorized vehicles. It can also spread by careless disposal of garden material.

### Prevention Strategy

- To prevent accidental introductions, learn how to identify Scotch thistle and eradicate infestations on your property.
- Always remove and properly dispose of all seed and plant materials on vehicles, clothing, shoes and pets before you exit or enter outdoor recreational sites.
- Always Remember To: **KNOW WHAT YOU GROW**

**& KNOCK IT OFF!**

#### Sources

- CABI Invasive Species Compendium: <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/37456>
- Idaho's Noxious Weeds 9th Edition, University of Idaho: <http://www.extension.uidaho.edu/publishing/pdf/BUL/BUL816.pdf>.



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# SCOTCH THISTLE DISTRIBUTION MAP

