



Carduus tenuiflorus

WA – Class A Noxious Weed, Prohibited Plant List

OR – Class B Noxious Weed

Slenderflower Thistle

Winged Plumeless Thistle, Sheep Thistle, Seaside Thistle

Family: Asteraceae/Compositae

Origins: Native to Europe and Northern Africa, Slenderflower Thistle was recognized as a serious invader in the Western United States as early as 1956.

Range: Found throughout the Western United States.

Habitat: Commonly grows in dry open areas such as pastures, ranges, right-of-ways, and disturbed areas.

Impact: Slenderflower Thistle forms dense stands in rangelands and pastures, displacing beneficial native forage species. The seeds are easily wind-dispersed and remain viable in the soil for up to 7 years.

Description: Slenderflower Thistle is a broadleaf winter annual that can grow up to 6.5 feet tall. After germinating in the fall, basal leaves persist as a rosette through the winter, producing flower stalks in the spring. Leaves are deeply lobed with long needle-like spines along the margins and taper at the base forming winged leaf stalks. Leaves are often covered with loose woolly hairs. Stem leaves are shorter, less lobed, and stalkless. Stems are unbranched to branched, and have large spiny wings that form at leaf bases and run down stems, giving them a triangular or square shape.

Flower heads are purple to pink and clustered at branch tips in groups of 5 to 20 or more. Outer bracts at the base of flower heads are covered in long spine tips, and inner bracts do not have spines. Flowers bloom from May to July. Seeds are achenes enclosed in a dry covering, 4 to 5 mm long,

Common Look-Alikes: Italian Thistle, Scotch Thistle.

* *Possibly toxic to livestock due to the high level of nitrates.*



Integrated Pest Management - Control Methods

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) combines various methods such as mechanical, cultural, biological, and chemical controls to manage pests. IPM offers the possibility of improving the efficiency of pest control while reducing its negative environmental impacts. For more information, see the Cowlitz County Noxious Weed's IPM Resources & Strategy Guide or contact your local Noxious Weed Control Board to develop a customized IPM plan.

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Non-Herbicide Control

Mechanical (pulling, cutting, digging, etc.)	Digging up plants is effective in controlling Slenderflower Thistle. Mowing 2 to 3 times throughout the year, before the plant develops flower heads, can help reduce or prevent seed.
Cultural	Maintain healthy competitive grasses and pasture plants by fertilizing and reseeding. Tilling can help control Slenderflower Thistle and maintain a healthy pasture.
Biological	Grazing sheep in infested areas can effectively control infestations, especially when grazing is deferred until autumn when ungrazed pasture plants are dense. Thistles seedlings may be grazed with other pasture plants if the competition is dense.

Herbicide Control: Foliar Broadcast Treatment

Aminopyralid (Milestone)	Timing: Apply to actively growing plants during the bolting stage. Remarks: Many desirable plants can be seriously injured or killed; using a non-ionic surfactant will help enhance control under adverse conditions; do not apply near the root zone of desirable trees; do not compost plant material that has been sprayed by this product; do not use manure from fields that have been sprayed with this product; do not apply near water.
Glyphosate (Rodeo, Killzall, Kleenup, Roundup)	Timing: Apply in early spring before bud stage. Remarks: Spray complete uniform coverage, but not to the point of runoff; dust on plants may reduce effectiveness; Glyphosate is nonselective and may injure or kills any vegetation it contacts; refer to the label for use in aquatic areas.
MCPA Amine	Timing: Fall to control rosettes; spring before the flower stalk elongates. Remarks: Annual treatments needed to control seedlings; rosettes wider than 6 inches may be difficult to control; avoid drift to sensitive crops; do not apply near water.
Clopyralid (Transline, Stinger)	Timing: Apply to rosettes. Remarks: Product will injure or kill sensitive broadleaf forages; consult the label for crop rotation restrictions before use; several crops may be injured for several years after application; do not apply near water.

* Cowlitz County Noxious Weed Control Board does not endorse any product or brand name. Brand names are listed as an example only. Other commercial products may contain the listed active chemical for herbicide control. Always read and follow the safety protocols and rate recommendations on the herbicide label. **The Label is The Law.**

This control sheet includes excerpts from the Written Findings of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board (WSNWCB), nwcb.wa.gov. Herbicide information from the PNW Weed Management Handbook (ISBN 978-1-931979-22-1) and product labels.