

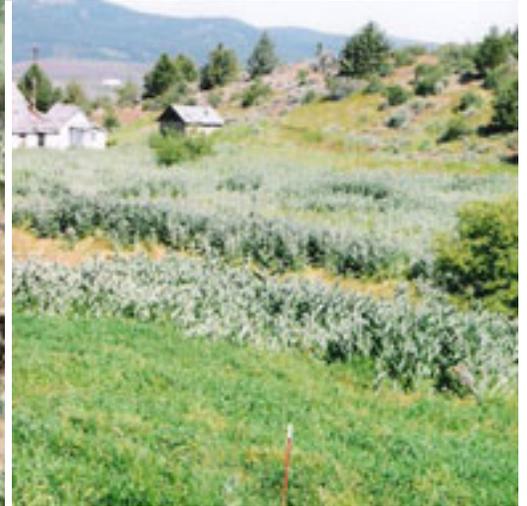
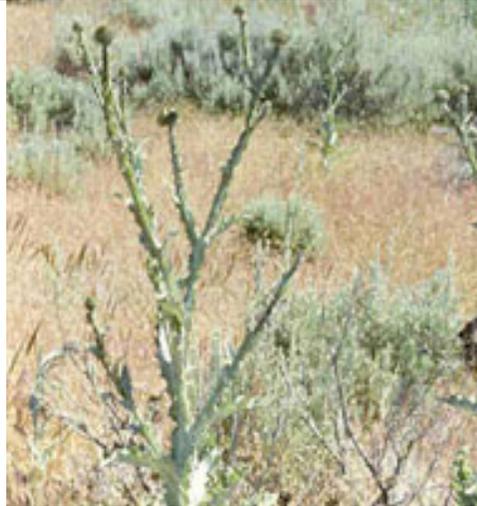
“B” Rated Weeds

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

Scotch thistle
Onopordium acanthium

Other common names: none noted

USDA symbol:
ODA rating: B



Introduction: Scotch thistle is native to Asia and Europe and is now widely distributed throughout North America. It is a tall, robust thistle with heavily winged stems and large lavender flowers. It is a significant rangeland invader forming large dense patches that exclude all other vegetation. It is often a significant issue in non-crop areas near barns and stock handling facilities.

Distribution: The first documented site in Oregon was in 1892 in Benton County though it rarely if ever shows up in Western Oregon. It is primarily a rangeland invader preferring light, well-drained soils but it also does quite well in clay soils also. It is common in all Eastern Oregon Counties with populations rapidly expanding despite control efforts.

Description: It is a robust biennial, sometime acting like an annual. It generally produces a rosette the first year and is capable of reaching heights up to 8 feet in the second. Winged stems support large leaves covered in fine soft white hair on upper leaf surface. Purple flowers are large producing large numbers of seeds. Thick stands often occur that are practically impenetrable because of the spiny nature and plant large size. Thistle patches are biennial producing dense growth one year and only a few plants the next, only to repeat the process the next year. It spreads only by seed.

Impacts: Scotch thistle is a serious rangeland and pine woodland invader. Forage production is greatly diminished as well as native plants. The costs of scotch thistle treatments are also quite high and must be repeated for years.

Biological controls: No approved biological control agent is available.

