

## Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)



*Fig 1. Small early rosette of leaves.*



*Fig. 2 Mature flowering plant.*

Canada thistle is a perennial weed classified as a restricted invasive by the Wisconsin DNR. It becomes established from seeds and regrows from crown buds or its extensive root system. Roots can extend several feet both horizontally and deep. Canada thistle emerges from its root system in late April to May with a second growth in the fall.

### Identification

Emerges as a small rosette of spiny leaves which later become 3-4 inches long and are shiny with crinkled spiny edges. The stem is smooth and the purplish pink flowers appear in late spring to early summer.

### Control Methods

- Dig out plants completely, including roots
- Avoid hoeing as this cuts roots into small fragments which can generate new plants
- Maintain loose soil through cultivation and use of compost or deep-rooted cover crops as thistle thrives in compacted soil

### Additional Information/Resources

- UW Extension Fact Sheet [A3924-04 Management of Invasive Weeds in Wisconsin: Canada Thistle](#)
- University of Minnesota Extension [Thistle Control](#)
- Penn State Extension [Canada Thistle: Bane of Gardeners](#)
- Dane County UW Extension Horticulture Hotline [608-224-3721](tel:608-224-3721) (M-F, 9 am-12 noon, April 15 – October 31) or [horticulture@countyofdane.com](mailto:horticulture@countyofdane.com)