
Canada thistle

Cirsium arvense



This upright, perennial, bushy thistle, 1.5 – 5' tall, is a host plant for aphids and borers that affect corn and tomatoes, as well as for a worm that damages corn. It emerges in Harpswell in May-June when daily temperatures are 41°– 46°F, spreads aggressively, mainly underground, forming dense, spiny colonies, and prefers sunny sites.

- Leaves stagger alternately along stems, dark green and smooth on top with slightly hairy undersides.
 - Flowers are lavender to pale pink or white, fragrant, $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide, umbrella shaped clusters at the top of the plant, June to October. Some are fragrant.
 - Bracts (hold each flower in place) are purplish with no spines.
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Canada thistles form dense, spiny colonies

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Fall seedheads

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HOW TO CONTROL:

- Pull seedlings within 2.5 weeks after germination or after they become perennial. Try to eliminate the whole root. This is most effective when the soil is moist. Root fragments re-sprout. Monitor and repeat.
- Cut 3 times/year at 10" for 3-4 years to reduce infestations. Cutting shorter than 10" will stimulate root buds.
- Canada thistle does not tolerate shade, so cut and smother with boards, sheet metal, or tar paper.
- Deadhead and dispose of seed heads.

NOTES: Herbicides are unreliable. They're most effective if used in fall on "rosette" stage when temperatures are warm before frost. But, different Canada thistle strains respond differently to the same herbicide.

The root system can grow horizontally as much as 18' in one season. Biological controls have thus far been unsuccessful.

Sources

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https://wiki.bugwood.org/Cirsium_arvense;
www.Invasive.org

Controls

https://wiki.bugwood.org/Cirsium_arvense;
<https://www.misin.msu.edu/facts/detail.php?id=38>
