

CARP Factsheet

INVASIVE ALIEN PLANT: The Prickly Imposter (not really Canadian)

COMMON NAME: Canada Thistle, Creeping Thistle

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cirsium arvense*

PLANT TYPE: Herbaceous Perennial

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Form – erect, branched stem

Height – 30cm to 150cm

Leaves – simple, alternate, lance-shaped, deeply lobed, spiny, may clasp stem

Flowers – generally in rounded or umbrella shaped clusters, purple or pink

Fruit – small, dry, single-seeded (up to 4cm long), feathery structure attached to seed base

Blooms in – June through October

Other Features – extensive, creeping roots

NOTE: thistles may be difficult to distinguish from one another – if you're not sure, ask for help

ORIGIN: Eurasia

INTODUCED (early 1600s) FOR: accidental

HABITAT: waste areas, agricultural crops, fields, and meadows

MEANS OF SPREAD: wind-dispersed seed, and spreading roots

PROBLEMS:

- major agricultural weed
- outcompetes native plants in open areas
- some studies indicate that this plant may actually produce chemicals that suppress the growth of other plants (allelopathic)
- large populations are difficult to eradicate

IF YOU HAVE THIS PLANT ON YOUR PROPERTY:

- remove it promptly, and do not put it in your back yard composter (dry and burn, or regular garbage)
- hand-cut plants before they go to seed; repeated cutting will deplete root stocks



Photos: Flower – Chris Evans, University of Georgia, www.forestryimages.com, Infestation – UAF Cooperative Extension Archives, University of Alaska – Fairbanks, www.forestryimages.com, Plant – Mike Townsend, Applied Geomatics Research Group (AGRG)