

Weed of The Week:

Canada Thistle

(*Cirsium arvense*)



Weed description:

Canada thistle is a member of the Sunflower family and was introduced from Europe. It is a creeping perennial that reproduces by seeds and horizontal roots. These roots have a fleshy appearance and can grow to depths of 6 to 15 feet. Overall plant height will range from 1 to 5 feet. Leaves are dark green with a silvery underside and have numerous spines along the outer edges. Leaf shape will vary from oblong to lance-shaped. Flowers are small, about 3/4-inch in diameter and are pink to purple in color. This noxious weed is somewhat unique given that there are both male and female plants and that it must receive 12 hours of sunlight in order to flower.

Distribution:

Distribution of Canada thistle is widespread throughout Arapahoe County. It can be found along roadsides, railroad corridors, cropland, rangeland, gardens, lawns and riparian areas.

Why is it a problem?

Canada thistle is a problem to riparian areas, rangeland, pastures and grasslands because it decreases the amount of usable forage for grazing animals. It can also reduce land value, reduce wildlife habitat and forage, displace native plants, and decrease native plant and animal diversity. By displacing native plants and animals, dense infestations threaten natural ecosystems and nature reserves by fragmenting plant and animal habitat. This plant is extremely difficult to control because of its extensive underground root system, vigorous growth habit and the number of seeds it produces. A single Canada thistle plant can take over an area 3 to 6 feet in diameter in less than 2 years.



If you would like more information contact:

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