

# Weed of The Week:

## Scotch thistle

(*Onopordum acanthium*)



### Weed description:

Scotch thistle belongs to the sunflower family and is native to Europe and Eastern Asia. This biennial will grow to heights in excess of 8 feet. Its leaves are large, grayish-green in color and have large spines. The leaves will typically be up to 2 feet long and a foot wide. The flowers are purple in color with a spiny bract and will be about the size of a golf ball. This weed reproduces only by seed and has a large, fleshy taproot.

### Distribution:

Scotch thistle is scattered throughout Arapahoe County, infesting waste areas, roadsides, railroad rights-of-way and other disturbed areas. However, it doesn't seem to be as troublesome in areas where native vegetation is doing well. It can still become established in these areas though. This plant can be found throughout Colorado and much of the United States.

### Why is it a problem?

Rangeland, pastures and grasslands are all affected by scotch thistle 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 sensitive plant and animal habitat. This plant is also a problem because its thorns can injure livestock, wildlife and even humans. When an infestation becomes well established it can form an impassable obstacle to grazing areas, waterways or even a favorite fishing area.



### **If you would like more information contact:**

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