



Scotch Thistle

Onopordum acanthium



- Biennial
- Grows 3-8 feet tall
- Blooms in summer
- Grows in waste areas, disturbed sites, pastures, fence lines, and right of ways
- Invades healthy, undisturbed sites as well, out-competing desirable forbs and grasses in pastures and rangelands. Sharp spines deter wildlife and livestock from grazing

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Suggested Control Methods for Scotch Thistle

Mechanical & Cultural Control

Hand Pulling/Digging: Best for small infestations; dig out the taproot 2-3 inches below the soil surface to prevent regrowth. Bag flowering plants to stop seed spread.

Mowing: Prevents seed production but must be done repeatedly before flowers form. Cut hollow flower stalks (late bolting stage) to prevent regrowth, but be aware some seed can still develop.

Grazing: Goats will eat Scotch thistle, including flower heads, and sheep will graze smaller rosettes.

Prevention: Establish dense, healthy pastures to outcompete thistle. Clean equipment and livestock moving out of infested areas to avoid spreading seeds.

Herbicide Control (Follow Labels!)

Timing: Most effective on young rosettes or early-bolting plants (spring/fall).

Effective Products: 2, 4-D, metsulfuron, aminopyralid, and triclopyr

Application: Apply with appropriate sprayers (backpack/large) and always add a non-ionic surfactant for better absorption.

Integrated Management

Combine methods for best results, focusing heavily on preventing seed set and targeting plants in the rosette stage for easier removal.