

Invasive Thistle Species Control:

Strategies for removal and prevention

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Invasive weed species can be difficult, time consuming, and expensive to remove once established. Addressing the issue quickly and thoroughly will have long lasting positive impacts.

Invasive thistle species:

Minnesota has many varieties of thistle plants, some being native and others being invasive. The three most common invasive thistles are the Canada thistle, Bull thistle, and the Plumeless thistle. All three are identified by the bright purple flowering head, each with a different presentation.



Canada Thistle, a common invasive

Removal strategies:

- Thistle spreads quickly to areas that have been disturbed through tillage, or have light coverage of native grasses or trees.
- Mechanical control will require multiple treatments
- Chemical control can have adverse effects on native forbs
- A combination of mechanical treatment, and spot spraying is considered the most effective method of treatment

Commonly Used Chemicals:

- Milestone: Spring application through early flower or in the fall (Sept. – light frost) of 5-7 fl oz per acre. There are many milestone resistant forbs that can tolerate application. Do not spray in tree plantings.
- Transline: Spring application of 1 pint per acre. Controls thistle in tree plantings
- Curtail: Spring application of 1.5-3.5 pints per acre.

Please remember to read herbicide labels before each use, and follow label directions. For specific recommendations not cover by the label, call your distributor or manufacturer representative.



Prevention:

Staying ahead of thistle can be difficult; the best plan of action involves having good timing, and using the combined methods of mechanical and chemical control to treat the plant before the flowers go to seed. Mature thistle plants can contain up to 10,000 seeds per plant, and has an aggressive root system that continually produces new shoots.

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Plumless Thistle

Clipping:

Mechanical treatment will be the most effective in areas where thistle is cohabitating with the desired flower species in a native prairie, as spraying will be harmful to the broadleaf forb varieties.



Thistle intermixed with desired natives: clipping multiple times in the growing season to approximately 1' with a mower attachment that does not create windrows, will allow for the growth of desired natives, while also not allowing the quick growing thistles to go to seed.

Spraying:

Areas that are dense with thistle and not with native flowers can be broadcast sprayed, as the grasses will not be affected by the broadleaf herbicide. Backpack or handheld spray works best for small areas.

Please consult with your local USDA Service Center for a more in depth look at your site's specific thistle control strategy.

