

Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*)

2/14/05

By far the most effective way to deal with Scotch thistle is prevention. Preventing seed production and spread, as well as controlling small populations, should be the first priority of any Scotch thistle management plan (Schuster and Prather). Seedbank longevity is the major management challenge, as seeds may remain viable for up to 20 years (CDFA Encyclopedica website). Therefore the scientific literature encourages the use of competitive perennial grasses to prevent establishment, site size expansion, re-establishment, or spread of Scotch thistle (CDFA Encyclopedica website, Schuster and Prather, WA Noxious Weed Control Board 2000, Kadrmas and Johnson 2002, Julian and Rife). “Competitive plants are key to long-term control of Scotch thistle because its seedlings are less competitive against established perennials” (Schuster and Prather).

Small infestations of Scotch thistle are effectively treated and eradicated by hand pulling or digging and cutting the plant stems below the soil horizon (CDFA Encyclopedica website, Schuster and Prather, WA Noxious Weed Control Board 2000, Kadrmas and Johnson 2002, Julian and Rife).

Mowing before flowering (June – September) will reduce seed production and assist in controlling large infestations (CDFA Encyclopedica website, Schuster and Prather, WA Noxious Weed Control Board 2000, Kadrmas and Johnson 2002, Julian and Rife). Goats will graze on Scotch thistle in early rosette stage, reducing population sizes and lowering seed production, and have been used successfully as part of a weed management plans (CDFA Encyclopedica website, Schuster and Prather, WA Noxious Weed Control Board 2000, Kadrmas and Johnson 2002).

Although no biological agents are commonly used, a specific strain of *Rhinocyllus conicus* (thistle head weevil) and a thistle crown weevil (*Trichosirocalus horridus*) both have been shown to feed on Scotch thistle (CDFA Encyclopedica website), both of which could be introduced and used for treating large populations of this and other noxious weeds in the area.

References

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