



Weed of the Month: Artichoke Thistle

Welcome to our "Weed of the Month" feature, designed to raise awareness about the impact of noxious invasive weeds on our environment. This month, we're focusing on Artichoke Thistle (*Cynara cardunculus*), an aggressive plant species that poses a significant threat to native ecosystems and agricultural lands.



Identification:

Artichoke Thistle is a large perennial thistle related to cultivated artichokes. It produces large pink or purple colored flower heads with seeds that are topped with feathery hairs. It can grow up to 8 ft tall and its leaves exhibit a grey-green color and can grow up to 4 ft long and 15 in wide.

Top Left- Close up image of a matured Artichoke Thistle bud with sepals.

Middle Right- Artichoke Thistle flower heads in both flower and in bud.



Invasive Behavior:

Originating from Europe, Artichoke Thistle has become very invasive to many parts of North America. It thrives in a variety of habitats, including coastal scrub and prairie, riparian areas, and grasslands. It has a blooming period from April to July and produces both vegetatively and by seed.



Impact:

The establishment of Artichoke Thistle can have serious ecological and economic consequences. The plant displaces desirable vegetation and competes for space with other plant species. Artichoke Thistle seed develops a deep and fleshy taproot within the first year of hitting the ground. Because of its strong taproot system, it can be a stubborn plant to get rid of. Because it is undesirable and can cause harm to wildlife and livestock, Artichoke Thistle poses challenges to both growers and ranchers.

Middle Left- Artichoke Thistle at the adult stage with flowering buds.

Bottom Right- Artichoke Thistle seed.





Control and Management:

Effectively managing Artichoke Thistle can be a time sensitive task. The rosette leaves often die during the summer and regrow when rain commences in the fall. It’s important to take this into consideration when trying to eliminate Artichoke Thistle because what looks like a dead plant that won’t come back is a plant that is just waiting for its regrowth stage. Mechanical approaches include cultivation or manual removal of the plant in the seedling stage. A large portion of the taproot must be removed for successful elimination. Herbicides may be necessary for established populations and should be applied during postemergence at the rosette stage. This practice should be used judiciously to minimize impact on non-target species.

Top Left- Rosett form of young Artichoke Thistle.

Middle Right- Close up image of Artichoke Thistle leaves.

Prevention:

Preventing the spread of Artichoke Thistle is key to its control. Routinely inspect and maintain your property for any signs of this invader. Be vigilant for any signs of this weed in your area and report sightings to the Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office at **(530) 822-7500**. Currently, this weed has been spotted in various places throughout Sutter County and county staff are working toward eradication of the infestations.



By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can work together to curb the spread of Artichoke Thistle and protect our native ecosystems. Join us next month for a new "Weed of the Month" feature, where we'll highlight another noxious invasive plant and share tips on how to address it.

For more information about Artichoke Thistle, feel free to visit the California Invasive Plant Council website at: <https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/profile/cynara-cardunculus-profile/> For more information about our other county programs, visit our website at: <https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/agricultural-department>

Thank you for your dedication to preserving our environment and agricultural land!

- Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office

