

## **The Enemy:** Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)

**STRATEGY:** Canada thistle is a perennial weed that can grow up 1 to 4 foot tall and came to us from Eurasia, probably from a crop seed prior to 1800. This is the most widely spread weed we have in Oregon. This thistle usually has a pink flower but has also been seen with white ones. In the spring the rosettes are normally small and hairless and are not normally found alone, as many of the plants are connected by the roots.

**ATTACK:** I have seen it in our lowest agricultural fields as well as in meadows at our highest elevations thus it has become one of our most damaging weeds. Once the seeds mature they develop a plume (like dandelions) that allow the seed to be blow for miles by the wind. But interesting enough, I would challenge anyone to see if any of the seeds actually grow into a plant. Instead, the plant has a vast root system (rhizomes) that allows the plant to 'creep' into adjacent properties and even through asphalt. This plant is often spread by a fragment of the root being in soil in tractor tires, ATV Tires, or Vehicle Tires.

**DEFENSE:** Canada thistle can be controlled with herbicides at three times of the year. Early spring mid summer; or fall (**after** the first killing frost). Herbicides such as Tordon 22K (must be licensed to purchase this one), Curtail, Opensight, Milestone, and Transline (Lontrel in horticulture) are all great choices. After the killing frost is my preferred time as most people have more time to do such work, it frees up your spring, and honestly one should expect 90% control. 2,4-D and Roundup are not products of choice as perennial plants will regrow after treatment (but may be your only option in a garden or other horticulture setting). Many biological control insects are available. As with any plant with rhizomes, mechanical (pulling, tilling, disking, or plowing) control is useless (in fact it encourages more growth). As always call your local County Weed Supervisor for more details. Like us on Facebook.