

# Scotch thistle

*Cirsium vulgare*

## What does it look like?

Scotch thistle is a tall biennial thistle, forming a rosette of leaves in the first year, and a flowering stem 1-2.5 m tall in the second year. The leaves are very spiny, deeply lobed and up to 15-25 cm long (smaller on the upper part of the flower stem). The entire flower head is 2.5-5 cm diameter, pink-purple, with all the florets of similar form (no division into disc and ray florets). The seeds are 5 mm long, with a downy pappus which assists in wind dispersal.

## Why is it a problem?

Scotch thistle is an invasive weed that grows almost anywhere. It is common in pastures, orchards, crops, gardens, lawns and waste areas. It spreads by windborne seeds and establishes itself especially where drought has made the land bare.



# Scotch thistle

*Cirsium vulgare*



## Control methods

### Physical control:

- Remove/dig out plants where possible.

### Chemical control:

Scotch thistle seem to be susceptible to MCPB and 2,4-DB, both of which will kill Scotch thistles without damaging clovers, So far no resistance to these herbicides has been found in New Zealand. But farmers should make sure they are sure of the identification of the thistles in their paddocks *before* they decide on the herbicide to use.

### Biocontrol:

- Get in contact with the pest plants team at Environment Southland to learn about our biocontrol options.

CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed.

Plants with seed must be buried deeply, burnt, or disposed of at a refuse transfer station. Follow up at six-monthly intervals to complete eradication.

## Related links

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network [http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora\\_details.aspx?ID=3706](http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.aspx?ID=3706)

Ag Pest <http://agpest.co.nz/?pesttypes=scotch-thistle>

## Management programme

Organisms of interest

## Request info

<https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityRFS/step/1?Subject=PlantPests&Species=118>