

# MARSH PLUME THISTLE

*Cirsium palustre* (L.) Scop.

**Family:** Asteraceae (Sunflower)

**Other Scientific Names:** None.

**Other Common Names:** Marsh thistle.

**Legal Status:** Regional Noxious: Bulkley-Nechako, Fraser-Fort George.



## Identification

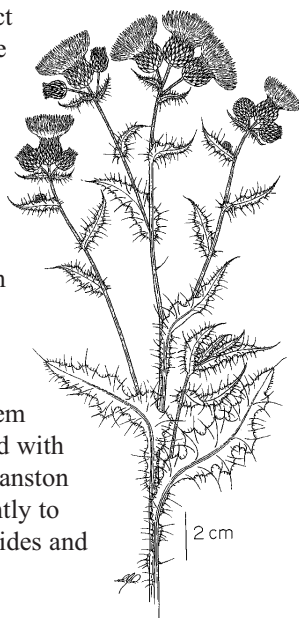
**Growth form:** Biennial forb.

**Flower:** Compact clusters of purple

flowers form at the tip of the stems. Bracts at the base of the flowers are sticky and tipped with a long spine.

**Seeds/Fruit:** Seeds are straw-coloured, 2.5–3.5 mm long, with a 9–10 mm long tawny pappus (Douglas et al. 1998).

**Leaves:** Spiny basal and stem leaves are deeply segmented with prominent woody veins (Cranston et al. 2000). Leaves are lightly to densely hairy on the undersides and have winged bases.



**Stems:** Slender, erect stems are usually unbranched and grow 0.3–2.0 m tall. Stems have spiny wings arising from the winged leaf-bases.

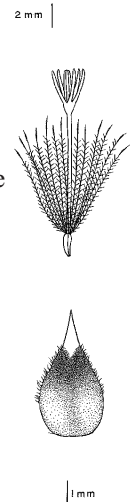
**Roots:** Fibrous.

**Seedling:** No information available.

### Similar Species

**Exotics:** The prominent spiny wings of the stems separate marsh plume thistle from most thistles (*Cirsium* sp.). Bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) is a stout, branched biennial whose leaves bear stout, long spines at the tip of the lobes.

**Natives:** No native species have stems with spiny wings.



## Impacts

**Agricultural:** Does not invade cultivated areas but can spread in moist pastures. This unpalatable plant replaces desirable forage plants, thereby reducing carrying capacity.

**Ecological:** Can colonize undisturbed riparian habitats, moist fields, and meadows, where it may replace native

vegetation, reducing wildlife and livestock forage values. Colonizes cut-blocks after harvesting and forms dense stands that compete with tree seedlings. Tall, persistent stems can cause snow press and other forms of mechanical injury to tree seedlings.

**Human:** No information available.

## Habitat and Ecology

**General requirements:** Well adapted to moist-to-wet openings, including pastures, bog and fen communities, cut-blocks, and roadsides. Grows in a range of soil types, including forest floor and even gravel, provided seepage is present. Although generally shade-intolerant, it will germinate under the forest canopy.

**Distribution:** Present in the Cariboo, Vancouver Island, and Omineca agricultural regions. Most common in the Robson Valley between McBride and Prince George.

**Historical:** Introduced from Europe.

**Life cycle:** A biennial that germinates in the first year,

overwinters as a rosette, then sets seed and dies the following year.

**Mode of reproduction:** By seed.

**Seed production:** No information available.

**Seed bank:** No information available.

**Dispersal:** Wind and water disperse the light, parachute-like pappus. Ingestion of seeds by birds may also disperse seeds.

**Hybridization:** None known.

## Management

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**Biocontrol:** No specific agents available. A seed-eating weevil (*Rhinocyllus conicus*) has successfully established on marsh plume thistle in the Robson Valley Forest District and experimental trials are currently underway.

**Mechanical:** In areas that are suitable for use of mowing equipment, mowing before flowering will prevent seed-set.

**Fire:** Effect not known.

**Herbicides:** Research is required to develop a herbicide prescription for this species.

**Cultural/Preventive:** On small infestations, hand-pull seedlings, rosettes, and mature plants before they set seed.

### Integrated Management Summary

Learn to identify this weed. Early detection is important to limit establishment of mature plants, seed banks, and large infestations. On small infestations, hand-pull seedlings, rosettes, and mature plants before they set seed. Where practical, seed disturbed areas to perennial grasses and forbs to provide cover and competition against this weed.

## References

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Cranston, R., D. Ralph, and B. Wikeem. 2000. *Field Guide to Noxious and Other Selected Weeds of British Columbia*. BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and Ministry of Forests.

Douglas, G. W., G. B. Straley, D. Meidinger, and J. Pojar, eds. 1998. *Illustrated Flora of British Columbia*. Vol. 1: *Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons (Aceraceae through Asteraceae)*. Province of British Columbia.

