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CANADA THISTLE MANAGEMENT TIPS

Canada thistle, a member of the Sunflower family, is a perennial forb with an extensive horizontal and vertical root system (see photo below). The flowers are purple and the leaves are spine-tipped. Plants usually grow two to four feet tall. Reproduction occurs through creeping roots and seeds. **Seed longevity can be 22 years.**



Canada thistle - 2 years root growth

Management and control efforts should focus on reducing seed production and depleting root reserves. Control efforts must be planned for many consecutive years at the existing site in order to prevent seed formation/dispersal and to monitor for, and appropriately treat, any new plants that emerge from roots or seeds.

Effective control measures for the management of Canada thistle include:

- 1. Mechanical (mowing & hand pulling):** Mowing may be a useful tool in managing Canada thistle, but must occur several times per year over many consecutive seasons. Hand pulling is only effective if there are a small number of plants and must be repeated, as the plant re-emerges, in order to deplete root reserves. Wear gloves when hand pulling.
- 2. Herbicide: Always follow directions on the label. The label is the law!** Calibrate your equipment to ensure that you are adding the proper amount of herbicide to your tank. The following herbicides are commonly used to control Canada thistle. **Do NOT use these herbicides in lawns, turf or ornamental settings – read the label.** *For the most effective control, apply herbicides when plants are in the bud stage or during the fall re-growth stage.*

Mixing rates in small backpack or hand sprayers are as follows:

Curtail:	1 - 2 oz herbicide to 1 gallon of water.
Milestone:	1 – 1.25 teaspoons herbicide to 1 gallon water.
GrazonNext HL:	1 oz herbicide to 1 gallon of water.
*Opensight:	2/3 teaspoon herbicide to 1 gallon of water.
*Chaparral:	2/3 teaspoon herbicide to 1 gallon of water.
DuraCor:	0.5 oz herbicide to 1 gallon of water.

Rates in large sprayers are as follows:

Curtail:	1 – 2 quarts herbicide per acre.
Milestone:	5 - 7 oz herbicide per acre.
GrazonNext HL:	1 quart herbicide per acre.
*Opensight:	2.5 – 3.3 oz herbicide per acre.
*Chaparral:	2.5 – 3.3 oz herbicide per acre.
DuraCor:	18 oz herbicide per acre.

NOTE: Adding a surfactant to your tank mix may enhance the performance of your herbicide and is required for certain herbicides (read the label). Add 0.5 - 1 oz per gallon of water for backpack sprayers or 1 – 2 pints per 100 gallons for large sprayers.

*** denotes that a surfactant is required for the herbicide to be effective**

- 3. Cultural (competition):** Plant competition is an effective way to prevent the invasion of Canada thistle. Proper management of perennial grasses can inhibit the establishment of this weed.
- 4. Integrated management:** Management of Canada thistle is more effective when more than one strategy is used. For example, mowing followed by an herbicide application, while also promoting the health of desirable plant communities.