

## Canada thistle      *Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop.

**Family:** Asteraceae (Composite family)

**Life cycle:** Biennial that reproduces by seed and rhizomes

**Habitat:** Pastures, prairies, roadsides, crop fields

**General description:** Erect plant up to 4 ft tall, typically found in patches due to spreading rootstalks. Leaves are irregularly lobed, spininess is highly variable. Small flowers (<1 in in diameter) are pink to purple, occasionally white. Rosettes in spring are 3 to 4 in in diameter before stems elongate.

**Key ID traits:** Variably lobed leaves up to 5 in long, occurs in patches due to vegetative reproduction.

**Similar species:** Canada thistle is smaller than the biennial thistles, and usually is found in distinct patches.

**Miscellaneous:** Canada thistle was the first weed declared noxious in the U.S., given this status by Vermont in 1795. The plant is dioecious, often resulting in colonies of either all male or all female plants.



Spring growth from perennial rootstock

