

# Canada thistle

*Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop.

Sunflower family

## Key identifying traits

- ❑ Plants often found in thick patches
- ❑ Leaves alternate and divided into spiny-tipped irregular lobes
- ❑ Small and spineless heads compared to other thistles; flowers  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in diameter, purple or rarely white, surrounded by spineless bracts
- ❑ Stems 1 to 4 feet tall, ridged, branching above

## Biology and ecology

- Perennial; often in colonies from creeping roots
- Spreads by both seeds and creeping roots
- Likes areas with good soil moisture and fertility
- Male and female flower heads on separate plants
- Flowering occurs during July and August
- Wide spread seed bank and long seed viability

## Control

*Prevention* - Learn to identify plants; know your property; beware of fill dirt, hay and seed from outside your area

*Biological* - Some established in county but not demonstrating substantial effect to date

*Cultural* - Good vegetative cover helps prevent initial infestations; can invade and dominate healthy sites

*Mechanical* - Very difficult because breaking up of roots serves to increase the number of plants; regular cutting or tillage can wear down plant reserves and reduce population and vigor but results are often erratic

*Chemical* - Some effective at label rates if strict attention is paid to timing (usually at bud stage and/or fall) which helps promote translocation to extensive root system

*Where found* – Seeds present throughout Stevens County. Plants appear on disturbed sites and colonies are found primarily in valleys, meadows and fields having ample soil moisture

