

Scotch Thistle *Onopordum acanthium* L.

Identification:

Scotch Thistle is a biennial that can grow up to 12 feet tall. The first year plant forms a rosette of leaves, and develops large flowering stems the second year. The leaves of this plant are large and spiny and covered with fine dense hairs that give it a grayish appearance. The upper leaves are alternate and coarsely lobed bearing sharp yellow spines. The basal leaves may be up to 2 feet long and 1 foot wide. Flower production is in the second year with the flowers being 1-2 inches in diameter with spine-tipped bracts. They are violet to reddish in color and bloom from August to June.

* Be sure not to confuse Scotch Thistle with Wavyleaf Thistle. Wavyleaf Thistle has lighter colored flowers-pale pink to creamy white, and deeply lobed leaf margins. Wavyleaf Thistle also appears gray, but flowers are distinctly different, large and pale, flower bracts have white margins and appear striped.

Potential Damage:

Scotch Thistle is a very aggressive plant that can form dense, impenetrable stands. The buried seeds can remain viable in the soil for at least 7 years, possibly 20 or more years, and one plant can produce 20,000 to 40,000 seeds.

Control and Prevention:

Take care not to drive or walk through infested areas. Stop and inspect vehicle between patrol units. MARK infested sites with bright pink or orange flagging. MARK SITE on map and provide to Refuge Operations Specialist **immediately** upon return from field. Constant effort, annually, during spring and fall growing seasons is necessary to prevent spread of this plant. Scotch Thistle is a Class B noxious weed in Washington state and land owners/managers are legally required to prevent the spread of this plant.

Current Status on Hanford Reach National Monument:

Scotch Thistle has not been reported on the Hanford Reach National Monument to date, although it occurs in surrounding counties. Vigilance regarding this plant is required to keep it from developing an infestation. IT IS VERY **IMPORTANT** to record and remove this plant AS SOON AS possible after it is sighted. Please be aware and look for this plant everywhere on the monument especially around water. The goal with this plant is to keep it from occupying any areas of the Monument. Eradication of any infestation will be accomplished by Refuge Operations staff.

