



# Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre* (L.) Scop.

**Common Names:** marsh thistle, swamp thistle, marsh plume thistle, European swamp thistle, European marsh thistle

**Native Origin:** Europe

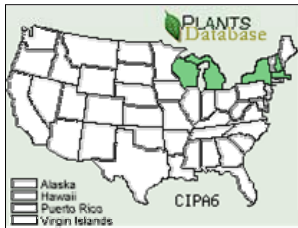


**Description:** Marsh thistle is an erect herbaceous biennial in the Aster family (Asteraceae) that can grow 4 to 5 feet in height. The stem is winged and spiny, with sparse to fairly dense whitish hairs. Much of the plant is covered in long, sticky hairs. Leaves in first-year rosettes are spiny, long, deeply lobed and hairy on the underside. On flowering plants, leaves are 6 to 8 inches long near the base and shorter toward the top. Flowering stems are erect, thick, and somewhat reddish in color, branched at the top and bristling with spiny wings aligned with the stem. Clusters of (12 or more) spiny purple flower heads bloom in June and July and by late summer produce tiny, hard, elongated seeds attached to feathery thistle-down. Seeds are dispersed by wind.



Spiny rosette- circle of leaves close ground

**Habitat:** It grows in abandoned fields, agricultural fields, coastal beach or dunes, coastal grassland, forest habitats, floodplains, wetlands, open disturbed areas, pastures, roadsides, wet ditches, vacant lots, wet meadows and yards. It does best in moist acidic soils and is somewhat shade tolerant.



**Distribution:** In the United States it has been reported in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Michigan and Wisconsin.

**Ecological Impacts:** Once introduced, this plant can aggressively colonize natural areas, decrease biodiversity and compromise the ecological integrity of an area.

### Control and Management:

- **Manual-** Repeated mowing or selective cutting close to the ground can reduce an infestation within three or four years. Hand-pull or dig rosettes. Cut and destroy flower heads while in the unopened bud stage.
- **Chemical-** Control using herbicides: Clopyralid or metsulfuron-methyl may be used as foliage sprays or glyphosate can also be used during the stage when plants are 6 to 10 inches tall, during the bud to flowering stage, or when applied to rosettes in the fall. If plants are near open water, use only herbicides approved for such use. Follow label directions and state requirements.
- **Biocontrol-** The best way of control may be through the long term use of biocontrol. Field trials are ongoing in Canada using the *Rhinocyllus conicus* weevil.



Wetland infestation

**References:** [www.uwgb.edu/biodiversity/herbarium/invasive\\_species/cirpal01.htm](http://www.uwgb.edu/biodiversity/herbarium/invasive_species/cirpal01.htm), <http://webapps.lib.uconn.edu/ipane/browsing.cfm?descriptionid=47> <http://plants.usda.gov>, <http://wisplants.uwsp.edu/scripts/links.asp?spCode=CIRPAL>, [www.dnr.state.wi.us/invasives/fact/thistle\\_EMarsh.htm](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/invasives/fact/thistle_EMarsh.htm) [www.glifwc.org/invasives](http://www.glifwc.org/invasives), [http://invasives.eeb.uconn.edu/ipane/ipanespecies/current\\_inv.htm](http://invasives.eeb.uconn.edu/ipane/ipanespecies/current_inv.htm) [http://invasives.eeb.uconn.edu/ipane/ipanespecies/current\\_inv.htm](http://invasives.eeb.uconn.edu/ipane/ipanespecies/current_inv.htm) [www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/library/FIA/2004/FIA-04-05-0053.pdf](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/library/FIA/2004/FIA-04-05-0053.pdf)