

Italian Thistle

(Carduus pycnocephalus)

Identification: An annual thistle that varies in height from ankle to head high. The leaves are white-woolly below, hairless-green above, and deeply cut into **two to five pairs of spiny lobes**. The flower heads are smaller and fewer than those of bull thistle (also an invasive). It spreads by seeds on wind, vehicles and animals.

Removal: Hand pulling can be used for small patches, but the root must be severed at least four inches below ground level so the plant does not regrow. Plants should be pulled well before seed is set. Mowing or slashing is not reliable because plants can regrow and still produce seed. Another method is to dig up the rosettes with a shovel in the fall and winter before they produce flowering stalks in late spring. Make sure you remove the taproot.

Disposal: If plants are pulled after flower heads are produced or seed is set, either dispose of plants in plastic bags or use solarization techniques by putting plants on black plastic and covering with black plastic.

Follow-up: An integrated, long-term plan with persistent follow-up and twice-yearly monitoring is needed to eliminate this thistle.

