

# Russian Thistle

## Identification and Control



# Russian Thistle



Source:  
<https://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=6375> and  
<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7486.html#IDENTIFICATION>

- It was introduced into the United States in the mid 1870s, possibly as a contaminant in flax seed.
- Russian thistle is an annual herb that can grow to 4 ft. (1.2 m) tall.
- After Russian thistle matures it detaches from the root system and tumbles in the wind, spreading seed (like another common name "tumbleweed" suggests). It is native to Eurasia.



# Identification



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<https://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=6375>

- Leaves are alternate and narrow. Upper leaves have a sharp point at the apex and are 1.3-2 in. (3.3-5.1 cm) long.
- Stems vary from 8 to 36 inches in length and usually have reddish to purplish stripes.
- Flowering occurs from midsummer to fall, when small, pink to greenish flowers develop from the leaf axils. Each flower is subtended by 3, spine-tipped leaves.



# Control



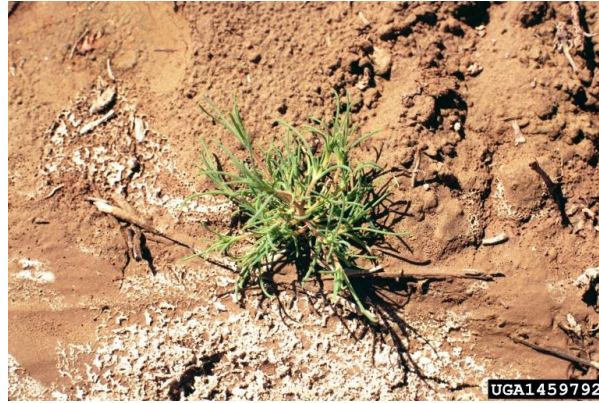
## Manual

- The first step to control is to keep current plants from producing seed that is added to the seed repository in soils. Limit disturbances such as tractor, animal and people traffic through infested areas to decrease its spread. Remove tumbleweeds from fence lines to keep plants from continuing to spread seed.
- Cultural control practices such as mowing or destroying young plants by other means can prevent seed production.
- Russian thistle is easily pulled or hoed out, at early growth stages. If plants have already started producing seed, it is best to collect the plants and dispose of them to prevent new contributions to the soil seed reserve. Pulling the plants at later stages may require wearing gloves, due to the spike-like inflorescence.

Source:  
<https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/natres/06314.pdf>



# Control



## Chemical

- Chemical control is best applied in the spring when plants are rapidly growing.
- Herbicides that will control Russian thistle include 2,4-D, dicamba, or glyphosate. Dicamba and 2,4-D are selective herbicides that will control many broadleaf weeds but usually do not injure grasses. Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide that can injure or kill most vegetation contacted.
- Use Personal Protective Equipment
- Follow the label – The label is the law!

Source:  
<https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/natres/06314.pdf>



# Control

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## Biocontrol

- The Division of Plant Industry's Biological Pest Control Section has two moth species, *Coleophora klimeschiella* and *C. parthenica*, that have been studied for use as biological control agents.

Source:  
[https://wiki.bugwood.org/HPIPM:Russian\\_thistle](https://wiki.bugwood.org/HPIPM:Russian_thistle)



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# Thank you!

Let's keep our community free of noxious weeds.

For more information on noxious weed identification and treatment, please visit [www.deschutes.org/weeds](http://www.deschutes.org/weeds) or contact **Ed Keith, County Forester, at [Ed.Keith@deschutes.org](mailto:Ed.Keith@deschutes.org)** or: (541) 322-7117

