

Know Your Nebraska Noxious Weeds

MUSK THISTLE *Carduus nutans* L.

Over generations both the rate of introduction and spread of noxious weeds have increased significantly. This change is mainly due to an increase in human travel, expanding commerce through trade, and a lack of knowledge of how weeds are spread. By becoming educated about noxious weeds, you're doing your part to help stop their spread and protect the environment.

What is the threat?

If noxious weeds are left uncontrolled, the Nebraska that we enjoy today will look much different for future generations. Do your part, become educated and help stop the spread of noxious weeds.

How did musk thistle get here?

[Musk thistle](#) is native to western Europe, Siberia, Asia Minor and North Africa. It was first introduced as an ornamental in the United States in 1852 in Pennsylvania. Musk thistle was declared a noxious weed in Nebraska in 1959.



What does musk thistle look like?

Musk thistle is one of 5 nonnative thistle species in Nebraska, so identification is important. There are also 5 native thistles that belong in the State and are beneficial to insects and wildlife. Click on this link to the [Thistles of Nebraska](#) to learn more about Nebraska's thistles. Click on this short [video](#) to learn how to identify musk thistle.

What is the impact of doing nothing?

Musk thistle is unpalatable to livestock and reduces forage production and utilization. It outcompetes desirable vegetation for water, light, and nutrients. If left uncontrolled musk thistle will completely dominate and leave the land useless. Because of its aggressive nature, not only is your property at risk but musk thistle will spread to neighboring properties as well.

Is musk thistle good for anything?

Musk thistle seeds are eaten by songbirds, and it is an important butterfly plant.

How does musk thistle spread?

Musk thistle reproduces only by seed, so controlling this plant at the rosette stage, or any time before bloom and seed production will prevent its' spread. Musk thistle is a biennial plant requiring 2 years to complete its life cycle and produce viable seed.

How can I control musk thistle?

Controlling small infestations is more effective and less expensive.

Options for [musk thistle control](#) include:

Mechanical - Hand digging, removing, and disposing the bloom prior to maturity.

Herbicide - Many herbicides are effective in controlling musk thistle.

Biological - The musk thistle head weevil (*Rhinocyllus conicus*) has limited success in Nebraska. Biological control agents are considered a tool and should not be relied on to eradicate an infestation.

What is a Noxious Weed?

A noxious weed is a nonnative plant, which is known to be invasive and can be directly poisonous to man, livestock, and wildlife. Noxious weeds compete with crops, rangeland and pastures reducing yields substantially.

It is the duty of each person who owns or controls land in Nebraska to effectively control noxious weeds on his/her property. For more information about Nebraska's Noxious Weeds contact your local [Weed Control Superintendent](#)