

This document is from the *Invasive Species of Idaho* website
at <https://invasivespecies.idaho.gov> as accessed on 23 February 2019.

Onopordum acanthium
Scotch Thistle

Other common names:
cotton thistle

Asteraceae, the sunflower family
Category: CONTAINMENT



Diagnostic Characteristics

- Biennial; grows 6-12 feet tall
- A large spiny rosette develops during the first year
- Stems are erect and branched; conspicuous spiny wings that are continuous along the length of the stems
- Leaves are lobed with spiny margins that extend down stems as spiny wings
- Fine white hairs cover the entire plant giving it a grayish-green appearance
- Flower heads are purple, globe-shaped, and up to 2 inches wide with stiff, spiny bracts

Background

- Native to Europe, introduced as an ornamental
- Inhabits rangelands, dry pastures, rights-of-way, waste areas, as well as river, stream, and canal banks
- Reproduces by seed and generally prefer moist sites or drainages in dry locations
- Can form tall, dense, impenetrable stands

Photo Credit:

Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org

Scotch Thistle

Onopordum acanthium

Present

