

European Swamp Thistle

Cirsium palustre

Habit: Herbaceous biennial ranging in height from 0.5-2 m (1.5-6.5 ft) tall.

Leaves: Thin, deeply lobed into pinnate segments, covered with loose matted hairs and spiny teeth along margins, up to 20 cm (8 in) long; basal leaves longer than those higher in the stem in flowering plants; leaves of basal rosettes (first year plants) are spiny, deeply lobed, long and hairy below.

Stems: Thick, with spiny lengthwise wings along stem; sometimes reddish; branching at the top.

Flowers: Spiny, purple flowerheads composed of disc flowers; bloom June-August.

Fruits/Seeds: Fruit is a tiny achene, 3 mm long; attached to a pappus or “thistledown”.

Habitat: Prefers moist, acidic soil conditions, shade intolerant; found in ditches, wetlands, swamps, fens.

Reproduction: By wind dispersed seed.

Similar Species: The native swamp thistle (*Cirsium muticum*) has non-spiny stems and flowerheads; non-native Canada thistle has non-spiny stems and flowers.

Comments: European swamp thistle is considered a high priority invasive species in the Hiawatha National Forest and has spread widely throughout northern Michigan.

Monitoring & Rapid Response:

Monitor moist acidic sites including wetlands, forest edges and fields; European swamp thistle blooms in June and July but can be identified by its thorny winged stems throughout the growing season; mowing or cutting close to the ground throughout the growing season can reduce infestations; flower heads should be removed from site; foliar herbicide application effective; can be used on fall rosettes, when plants are small - 10-25 cm (6-10 in) and during the bud/flowering stage.

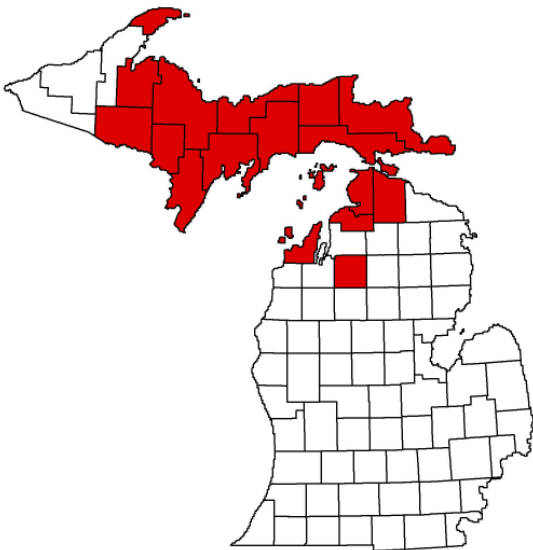


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