

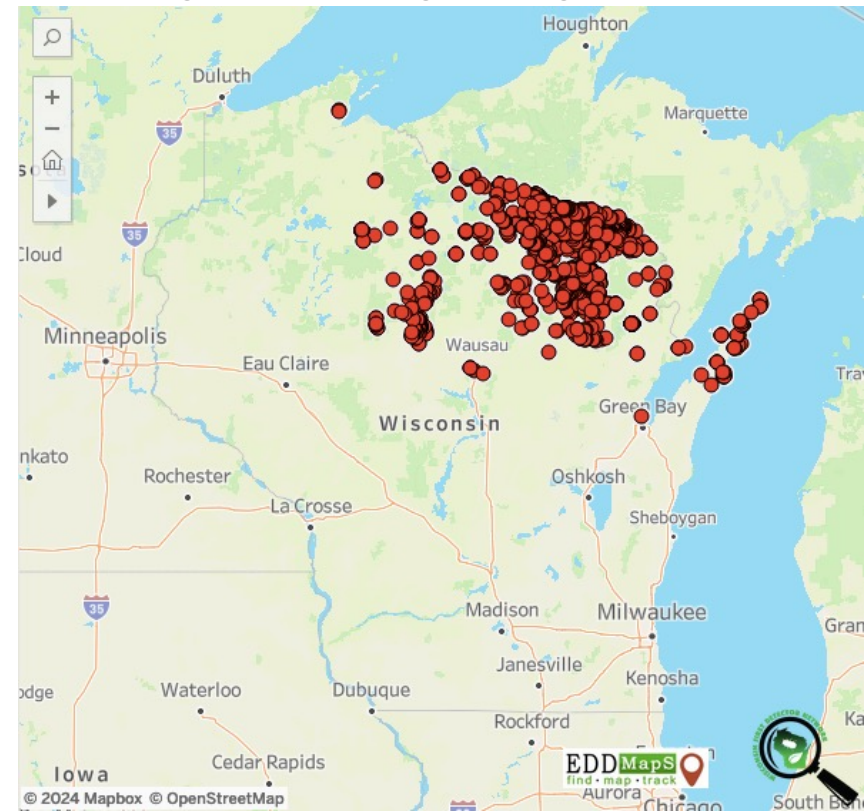
European marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*)



- Tall, spindly thistle with hairy and spiny stems; small flowerheads
- Habitats it invades:
 - Swamps
 - Roadsides
- Status
 - Wisconsin: Prohibited/Restricted
 - Not regulated in neighboring states



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European marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*)

Leaves alternate, simple

- Up to 12" long, deeply lobed, mostly near the stem base
- Leaf margins spiny; leaves hairy
- Stems hairy and with spiny wings
- Upper stem leaves small and sparse





European marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*)

Flower/fruit

- Flowerheads lavender, $\frac{3}{4}$ ” wide
- Flowerheads borne in dense clusters atop tall stems; June-Aug.
- Flowerheads with small grayish green bracts with pointy, spineless tips
- Fruit is an achene with fluff



Thistle comparison and look alike

Name	Life cycle	Stem	Leaves	Flowers
Canada thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>)	Perennial, creeping roots	3-5', slightly ridged , may have scattered hairs, not usually spiny	Deeply lobed, up to 6" long; yellow spines scattered along wavy edges , may be hairy on underside	¾" , lavender to pale pink, solitary or in small clusters; bracts flat except for pointed purplish tip that peels away from flowerhead
Plumeless thistle (<i>Carduus acanthoides</i>)	Biennial, taproot	3-6', densely covered with spiny wings	Deeply lobed, wavy around edges, very spiny; hairy on underside of leaf, especially on midrib	1" purple (sometimes white); solitary or in clusters of 2-5; bracts narrow, spreading , short spiny tips
Musk (nodding) thistle (<i>Carduus nutans</i>)	Biennial, taproot	2-8', spiny wings, but not spiny directly below flowerhead	Deeply lobed, spines along wavy edges, may have white cast on edges; hairless; white midrib	2-3" purple to pinkish, often nodding , solitary; bracts large, triangular, showy
European marsh thistle (<i>Cirsium palustre</i>)	Biennial, taproot	2-7', sharp spiny wings; densely to moderately hairy; usually leafless below flowers	Deeply lobed with sharp spine at tip of each lobe; wavy edges; upper side variably hairy, underside densely hairy especially along veins	¾" lavender to pinkish-purple, in tight clusters ; green to purple-tinged bracts flat except for darker tip that peels away from flowerhead, fringed with hairs around edges
Bull thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>)	Biennial, taproot	2-6', hairy, covered with small, spiny wings	Lobed, each with ½" sharp, yellowish spine at tip; hairy on upper surface; woolly underside	1 ½ - 2" reddish-purple flowerhead, solitary or a few clustered; bracts narrow, spreading, tipped with short spines

There are several **native biennial thistles**: field thistle (*Cirsium discolor*), tall thistle (*C. altissimum*), swamp thistle (*C. muticum*), dune thistle (*C. pitcheri*), and Hill's thistle (*C. pumilum*). They are generally less spiny than the invasive thistles.

Dune thistle is rare, grows on Lake Michigan sand dunes and has white to cream flowers. **Hill's thistle** is also rare and is much shorter (1-2') than the other thistles with reddish purple flowers. The other native thistles all have bracts that are green with a white strip down the center. **Swamp thistle** bracts have cottony webbing between. **Field thistle** and **tall thistle** leaves are densely hairy and white underneath.