

Biennial Thistle Comparison



Leaf Front



Leaf Back

Pictured from left to right: Bull Thistle, Musk Thistle, Plumeless Thistle

Species	Bull	Musk	Plumeless
Leaves	Deeply cut with distinct spines on edges	Moderately lobed with white midrib	Heavily lobed
Hair on Leaves	Coarse hairs on top, white soft hairs on lower side	No hairs	Hairy on underside of leaf with long hairs present on midrib
Stems	Spiny, appears winged	Not spiny directly below flower	Spiny
Flowers	1-2" wide tear/gumball drop shaped	1-2" wide, often nodding with distinct stiff bracts	$\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide, small, long bracts
Key Characteristic	Flower shape, long sharp spines on lobes of leaves	Large flowers with stiff bracts, no hairs on leaves, stem directly below flowers lack spines	Smaller flowers, hair on underside of leaves along midrib