Management

----------The key is to remove or kill the taproot----------

Physical control- Physically removing plants is very time consuming, as a large portion of the taproot must be removed to ensure the plant does not grow back. Prescribed burns help to reduce aboveground vegetation, but are not effective since regrowth from the taproot is still possible. Goats will consume some plant material, but again, regrowth following browsing is likely.

Chemical control-
Chemicals can be a useful tool in an integrated approach to the management of artichoke thistle. Chemical application may be safely made by backpack, ATV, and helicopter. Special consideration for species of concern and non-target plants must be taken.

Biological control-
Artichoke thistle is closely related to the commercially-grown globe artichoke (a very important crop in California), so a purposeful introduction of an insect or fungus to attack the plant is unlikely.

Photo: Pamela Beitz

Get involved!

Want to play a role in the management of noxious weeds in your parklands? Inquire with your local EBRPD park staff about the possibility of setting up a work day for your organized group or visit http://www.ebparks.org/getinvolved/volunteer/operations for more information and to register for volunteer opportunities. See you in the parks!

Questions:

If you have any questions about artichoke thistle or other invasive and noxious species, call or email the Park District Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program at (510) 544-2343 or CBrierley@ebparks.org.

A hillside coved in a sea of blooming artichoke thistle.

Text and design: Courtney Glettner
Cover and back cover photos: EBRPD staff

This brochure is provided as a public service of the Stewardship Department of the East Bay Regional Park District.

East Bay Regional Park District

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Artichoke Thistle

East Bay Regional Park District

How did it get here?

Artichoke thistle (*Cynara cadunculus* L.), also known as wild artichoke and cardoon, is native to the Mediterranean region and has become a noxious weed in many parts of the world. First brought to California in the 1800's as a garden vegetable, it later escaped and has since been a pest in open, disturbed areas, like coastal rangelands and native grasslands.

Identification

Artichoke thistle, a member of the sunflower family, is identified by its spiny, lobed, gray-green leaves and grooved stalk with spines. Between May and July, plants can form one or more spiny, bright purple flowers 2- to 3-inches in diameter. Plants can grow up to 5-ft wide by 5-ft tall, and have as many as 50 flower heads.

An amazingly aggressive competitor

One flower can produce up to 200 seeds, which are dispersed by wind, water, livestock, and vehicles. Artichoke thistle is a perennial, meaning it grows, flowers, and produces seed over the course of a year, dies back, and returns the next year from the same root. It has a large taproot and tuber that can grow up to 8 feet deep, providing reserves that allow plants to re-sprout even after being cut.

What's the big deal?

In addition to degrading rangelands and creating a nuisance for recreation, artichoke thistle and other noxious weeds alter the functioning of the ecosystem. Artichoke thistle outcompetes grasses and native plants, reducing forage available for livestock and threatening endangered species, like the Santa Cruz tarplant. If left unmanaged, these plants have been observed to grow to dense monocultures of up to 20,000 plants/acre. This reduction in vegetation diversity impacts the many other species that call the ecosystem home.

Photo: Pamela Beitz

A dense stand of artichoke thistle in Wildcat Canyon Regional Park. A noxious weed is a plant that has been designated by the Federal, State or county government to be threatening to public health, agriculture, recreation, wildlife, or property.

A pest in the parks

As stewards of the land, the EBRPD has been battling artichoke thistle in the parks for years. Briones Regional Park, once with a substantial artichoke thistle population, is now almost free of the plant. Since 1997, EBRPD has been partnering with the Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture to manage artichoke thistle in Wildcat Canyon Regional Park.

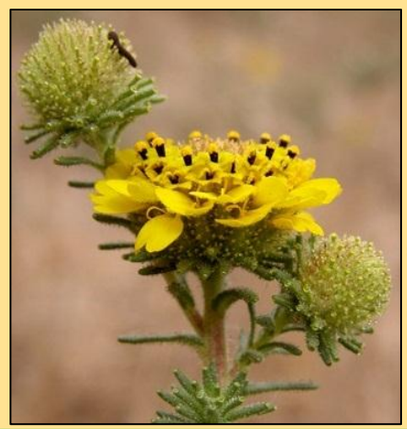

Photo: EBRPD staff

Santa Cruz tarplant (*Holocarpha macradenia*)