DOYLESTOWN TOWNSHIP'S
ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

INVASIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

SEPTEMBER

CANADA THISTLE

Cirsium arvense

HISTORY & IDENTIFICATION

- was accidentally introduced to North America in the 1600s from Europe.
- is designated as a noxious weed in 43 states.
- an erect, perennial herbaceous plant, to 4 ft. tall.
- leaves are lance-shaped with irregularly lobes, 2-6" long.
- flowers are clustered purple to white and occur in late June to August.
- seeds are 1-1½ in. long with 1000 per plant and viable up to 20 years.

LIFE CYCLE & GROWTH HABIT

- can out compete by shading with its dense growth and by tapping deep into the soil removing water and nutrients for other plants.
- can grow in soils with salt concentrations of up to 2%.
- favored conditions are unshaded, moist, aerated clay loam.
- spreads by wind-dispersed seed and expands locally by vegetative means through lateral roots and root fragments.

PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

IDENTIFY

There are a number of look-alikes, both native and exotics, which are difficult to distinguish without assistance. The common, weedy thistles in PA include bull thistle (Cirsium vulgare), musk thistle (Carduus nutans), and plumeless thistle (Carduus acanthoides).

CONTROL

- Control by exhausting the storage roots by removing the first shoots in early June.
- Then, persistent removal of shoots by weeding or mowing will eliminate it in 2 years.
- A 21 day weeding schedule is optimal.

RESOURCES

- https://www.invasive.org/alien/pubs/midatlantic/ciar.htm
- https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants_Land_Water/PlantIndustry/NIPPP/Documents/canada_thistle%20article.pdf
- https://mdinvasives.org/iotm/april-2005/
- https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs142p2_018027.pdf
- https://weedecology.css.cornell.edu/weed/weed.php?id=9