

Cirsium vulgare

COMMON NAMES

Scotch thistle

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Violet/Purple

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Taprooted biennial 50-150cm tall; stems branched and covered in fine cobweb-like hairs; prickles pale 4-10mm long; purple flowers 28-33mm long (Webb et al., 1988). The flowers are clustered at the end of the stem and the numerous wind-dispersed seeds (West, 1996).

HABITAT

Terrestrial. Relatively open conditions are required for germination and establishment (West, 1996). Wasteland, roadsides, pastures, gardens, cultivated land, disturbed forest (Webb et al., 1988). Track edges, slips, barer ridges, under light gaps in the forest (West, 1996).

GENUS

Cirsium

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Cirsium vulgare (Savi) Ten.

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November, December, January, February, March

YEAR NATURALISED

1867

ORIGIN

Eurasia, N. Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Accidental.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Biennial. A rosette of leaves is formed in the first year of growth and a flower-bearing stem is formed in the second year (West, 1996). Seed is dispersed by wind (ibid.)



Cirsium vulgare. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Mount Dick, Wairarapa. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 09/01/2007, Licence: CC BY.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

cirsium: A kind of thistle

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

CIRVUL

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/cirsium-vulgare/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026