

Field Thistle – *Cirsium discolor*



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Habitat Notes:

Floodplain forests, mesic to dry upland forests and woodlands, clearings, old fields, meadows, and roadsides.

Species Identification:

- Purple to white flowers
- Height 3-9 feet
- Stem branching especially near summit, strongly furrowed, villous or hirtellous or glabrate.
- Leaves 10-20 x 2.5-10 cm (or basal to 40 cm long) dissected, with lobes linear-lanceolate to narrowly oblong. Revolute margin, bristly serrulate or spiny, white tomentose beneath.
- Phyllaries appressed, with spines 4-5mm (outer recurved).
- Cypselae 4-5mm; pappi 1.5-2.7cm, white.

Cultural Conditions:

- Full sun to part shade
- Clay, loam, sandy soil
- Good drainage, occasionally dry, occasionally wet

Ecological Benefits:

- Wildlife: The large flowers provide an abundance of nectar and attract many species of butterflies, hummingbirds, bees, and moths.
- Seed eating birds like the American goldfinch are also attracted to this species.

Growing Protocol:

- Seed stratification: C(60)
 - 60 day cold moist stratification. Keep at temperature range of 33-38 degrees for duration of stratification.
 - Add water to stratification media periodically to ensure seeds do not dry out.

Collection Information:

- Fluffy seeds. Tugging the pappus can aid in knowing when to harvest. If the stem is still green and the seeds refuse to release with the pappus, its too early.
- Collect when stem is greyish white and pappus full and easy to pull.
- Holding the bag up to them and cutting under the receptacle letting them fall in the bag can be a good way to avoid having to touch the plant.

Pests & Disease:

- Several species of weevil can cause significant damage to field thistle. They feed on developing seeds and flowering parts, reducing the number of quality seeds produced.
- The damage done by weevil can also lead to a secondary fungal infection that may kill the entire plant.