



KEY
CHARACTERISTICS

growth

Grows 1.5-6 ft tall. Erect biennial herb, sometimes a winter annual, with a stout fleshy taproot.

flower

Showy, purple to violet, in heads 4.5-7 cm wide, surrounded by numerous large, lance-shaped, spine tipped bracts 2-10 mm wide. Somewhat resembles a pinecone. The heads are single, terminal and usually nodding. First flowers in 2nd year, May -July.

stems

Erect up to 3 m tall, much branched (1 to 7 branched stems that grow 1/2 -2 m tall). Stems have spiny wings their full lengths except for a few inches below flowerheads.

leaves

Stem leaves are alternate, sessile. 7.5-15 cm long with spiny margins and wings from the decurrent leaf bases.

fruit

Rosette leaves are broadly elliptic to lanceolate, pinnatifid with spiny margins that are silvery white to purplish. Blade surface varies from hairless to hairy.

Fruits are 3/16 inches long, shiny, yellowish brown with a plume of white hair-like fibers. Pappus of numerous capillary bristles 1- 2 cm long.



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Above: head with disk flowers; Note spine tipped bracts. Left: mature seed head, showing long white capillary bristles attached to achene.

Elevation:
Up to 8000 feet

Ecotypes Invaded:
Desertlands, grasslands, riparian, woodlands & forests.

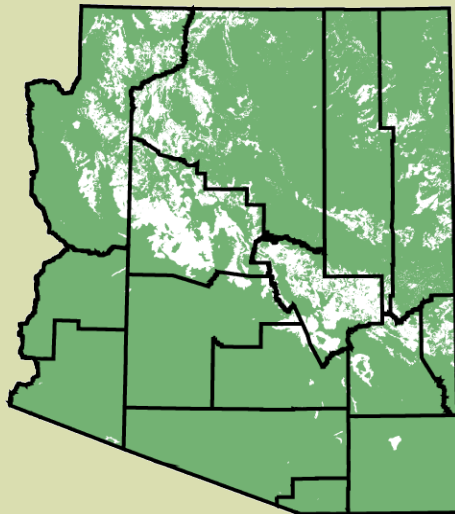
ECOLOGY & DISTRIBUTION

It is found in stream valleys, open wooded areas, and disturbed areas such as fields, roadsides, and waste places. It can also occur in deferred pastures and native grasslands. Does not tolerate shade or excessively wet or dry conditions. It can grow up to 8000 ft elevation, in neutral to acidic soils.

It spreads rapidly forming extremely dense stands which crowd out native plants.

Seeds may remain viable in the soil for periods as long as ten to fifteen years.

SUITABLE HABITAT



Suitable habitat based on the Arizona Wildlands Invasive Plant Working Group (AZ-WIPWG) assessment. Green = suitable habitat; White = unsuitable habitat; Gray = unknown. Based on Brown, Lowe & Pae (1980) vegetation communities.



Musk thistle seedlings have wavy margins and are somewhat lobed with yellow marginal spines.

