

Carduus nutans

COMMON NAME

nodding thistle

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Carduus nutans L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

NVS CODE

CARNUT

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

Terrestrial. A plant of roadsides, pasture, wasteland and amongst crops such as lucerne. Will grow in most soil types.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

An erect thistle growing to 1.6m high (commonly 80-120cm), with a stout, branched, fleshy taproot up to 40cm deep. Rosette leaves are usually long, narrow and deeply cut into many narrow lobes with spiny edges and green and only sparsely hairy on both surfaces. The upper surface of the leaf often has a metallic sheen and a whitish marginal zone, especially at the base of the spines. Flowering stems are erect (up to 1.5m) and a purple flower head which droops. Seeds are large, heavy (3-4mm long) with a pappus of fine toothed bristles 15-25mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Can be distinguished by the large distinctive nodding flower heads.

FLOWERING

November, December, January, February

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple

FRUITING

(November)-December-May.

YEAR NATURALISED

1889

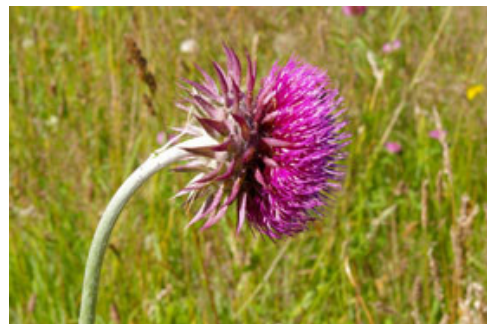
ORIGIN

Eurasia, N Africa

ETYMOLOGY

carduus: From the Greek word kardos which means thistle.

nutans: Drooping



Carduus nutans. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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Reason For Introduction

Accidental

Life Cycle Comments

Annual or Biennial. Seed germinates in the late summer, early autumn but has the ability to germinate at any time of the year. Seed germinates late summer to early winter, but germination also occurs in spring or summer if adequate moisture is available. Seed that germinates in autumn, remains vegetative during the first summer and flowers in the second summer, hence biennial.

Reproduction

The plant is dispersed by seed only.

Seed

Seed may lay dormant in the soil for up to twenty years. Approximately 200 seeds produced per flower head of which two-thirds are viable.

Dispersal

Seed is dispersed locally by wind and also spread in mud, water, machinery, fodder and agricultural seed. 91% of seed falls within 1-2 metres of the plant and only a few were detected more than 10 metres away (Department of Conservation 1996).

Tolerances

Physical damage that may prevent flowering results in the persistence of the plant until flowering occurs.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carduus-nutans/>