

# Wild Artichoke (*Cynara cardunculus*)

November 2015



© Tracey Hardwicke

Wild Artichoke is a long-lived spiny weed of pasture and native grasslands.

It is a declared weed under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (NRM Act).

## Description

Wild Artichoke produces annual leaves and flowers from a perennial taproot.

The taproot is large, fleshy and grows up to 2 m deep.

Leaves mostly appear after autumn rains. Plants grow slowly over winter, then more rapidly in spring.

The leaves grow in a rosette from the central taproot. Seedlings develop a taproot in their first year of growth.

The rosette leaves are up to 90 cm long and 30 cm wide. They are deeply divided with long rigid spines. The upper surface is greyish-green while the underside has a dense covering of fine white hairs.

The rosette leaves start to die as the flower stems emerge in October. The stems are ribbed and spiny and have smaller leaves. Stems normally grow to 1 m high.

Flowering takes place from November to February.

Flower heads are blue to purple and approximately 10 cm across. The flowers are enclosed by tough spiny bracts. Plants typically have 16 flower heads each but can have up to 50.

Each flower can produce 200 seeds.

Plants generally flower in their second summer, but can sometimes flower in their first year.

## Impacts

Wild Artichoke forms dense populations of prickly vegetation that degrade pasture. Once established, it competes with desirable pasture species by shading and drawing moisture and nutrients from the soil.

The long, rigid spines on the leaves and flowers deter grazing animals.

Wild Artichoke invades native grasslands, grassy woodlands and riparian vegetation where it suppresses native plant growth and degrades fauna habitat.

It is a common pest of roadsides and wasteland.

Unmanaged infestations quickly form dense thickets which hinder property access and use.

Wild Artichoke is thought to cause contact dermatitis in some people.





A semi-mature Wild Artichoke © Tracey Hardwicke

## Distribution

Wild artichoke is native to the Mediterranean region of southern Europe and northern Africa. It was introduced to Australia as a potential food and fodder plant.

Wild Artichoke grows mainly where annual rainfall exceeds 450 mm. It can also invade watercourses, roadsides, drains and wetlands in lower rainfall areas. It is most competitive in heavy clay soils.

It is distributed throughout the Mount Lofty Ranges, with dense infestations on the western slopes to the north and south of Adelaide.

The plant reproduces almost entirely by seed.

Seed is spread by wind, sheep, cattle, water, mud, birds and mice.

New plants can develop from fragmented taproots which may be spread through cultivation or grading.

## Control methods

Control of Wild Artichoke requires a long-term approach. The key to plant control is to exhaust the seed bank and destroy the large, long-lived taproot.

Control should begin with isolated patches and then work towards the larger infestations.

Herbicides are effective from June to November while the plant is in the rosette stage.

Hand grubbing of scattered plant is effective in suppressing new season growth. Slashing plants when the flower stalks form can restrict flowering and seed production.

For advice on chemical control techniques contact your nearest Natural Resources Centre. Please refer to the *Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia* for advice on chemical control. You can find it on Biosecurity SA's website at [www.pir.sa.gov.au](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au)



Wild Artichoke flower © Wikimedia Commons, BotBln

## Declarations

The following sections of the NRM Act apply to Wild Artichoke in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region:

- 175 (2) Cannot transport the plant or anything carrying it**
- 177 (1) Cannot sell the plant**
- 177 (2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant**
- 182 (2) Landowner must control the plant on their land**
- 185 NRM authority may recover costs for control of weeds on roadsides from adjoining landowners**

## More information

Please contact your local Natural Resources Centre for further information, advice and assistance in controlling Wild Artichoke.

### Black Hill

115 Maryvale Road, Athelstone 5076  
T: 08 8336 0901

### Gawler

8 Adelaide Road, Gawler South 5118  
T: 08 8523 7700

### Willunga

5 Aldinga Road, Willunga 5172  
T: 08 8550 3400