

**Plant Propagation Protocol for *Cirsium brevistylum***  
 ESRM 412 – Native Plant Production  
 Spring 2026



2013, Gerald D. Carr <sup>7</sup>



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<b>TAXONOMY</b>	
Plant Family	
Scientific Name	Asteraceae <sup>3</sup>
Common Name	Aster family
Species Scientific Name	
Scientific Name	<i>Cirsium brevistylum</i> Conquist
Varieties	N/A
Sub-species	N/A
Cultivar	N/A
Common Synonym(s)	N/A
Common Name(s)	Indian or clustered or short-style thistle <sup>2</sup>
Species Code (as per USDA Plants database)	CIBR2


**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Geographical range

*Cirsium brevistylum* occurs in parts of southeastern Canada as well as areas in Oregon, Washington, and Northern California. <sup>1</sup> In the Pacific Northwest, its range extends inland to the northern Rocky Mountains of southern British Columbia, Idaho, and northwestern Montana, as well as the Blue and Wallowa ranges of eastern Oregon. It is absent from the central and southern Cascade Range. <sup>4</sup>



North American Distribution map <sup>5</sup>

		<p>This map (left) shows the distribution in Canada, Washington, Oregon, and northern California. It does not appear in the central parts of these states, most likely due to its habitat preferences. The counties in WA where it grows the most frequently include Clallam, Jefferson, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Lewis, Skamania, Thurston, Pierce, King, Okanogan, Columbia, and Spokane.</p>
	<p>PNW Distribution <sup>13</sup></p>	
<p>Ecological distribution</p>	<p><i>Cirsium brevistylum</i> occurs in coastal meadows, marshes, swamps, riparian woodlands, moist sites in coastal scrub, chaparral, coastal woodlands, mixed conifer-hardwood forests, or coniferous forests.<sup>4</sup> It has been documented hybridizing with <i>Cirsium edule</i>, particularly in overlap zones like coastal slopes where both occupy disturbed, moist habitats.<sup>8</sup></p>	
<p>Climate and elevation range</p>	<p>This species thrives in mild, moist climates near the Pacific Northwest coast. The elevation range is from 0-1000 meters, meaning it typically grows in lower elevations.<sup>4</sup></p>	
<p>Local habitat and abundance</p>	<p><i>Cirsium brevistylum</i> occurs in slopes, open forest, and moist meadows from low to middle elevations in the mountains.<sup>6</sup></p>	
<p>Plant strategy type / successional stage</p>	<p>This species is a short-lived thistle that colonizes moist habitats disturbed by natural and manmade sources. This includes natural disturbances such as gravel bars of riparian habitats or soil after a fire. Manmade disturbances like road and powerline corridors and logging units can disrupt soil. <i>Cirsium brevistylum</i> grows and reproduces for several years and may disappear as more competitive plants establish.<sup>8</sup></p>	
<p>Plant characteristics</p>	<p><i>Cirsium brevistylum</i> Cronq. is a tap rooted forb (herbaceous flowering plant) classified as annual, biennial, or short-lived perennial in duration.<sup>3,9,12</sup> Plants typically reach 20–350 cm (0.7–11.5 ft) in height, with exceptional individuals exceeding 3 meters (10 ft) under optimal moist conditions.<sup>9,12</sup></p> <p>From a sturdy taproot, it forms a basal rosette of large, deeply lobed leaves with shapes ranging from elliptic, oblanceolate, to oblong; the longest basal leaves measure 25–35 cm and feature pinnatifid margins lined with twisted, spine-tipped teeth borne on broadly winged petioles armed with additional spines.<sup>3,12</sup> Flowering stems are erect and usually unbranched below, often</p>	

branching distally into a candelabra-like structure, and densely coated in soft hairs, webby fibers, or jointed trichomes that give a gray-green, tomentose appearance. <sup>12</sup>


Flower heads are hemispheric to ovoid (2.5–4 cm long × 3–4 cm wide), occurring singly or in dense terminal clusters at stem apices and leaf axils. Each head is enclosed by multi-series phyllaries that are cobwebby, arachnoid, and tipped with slender yellowish spines. The corollas are tubular, white to pinkish purple (rarely entirely white), measuring ~2 cm long, and densely packed to form showy, pollen-rich inflorescences attractive to native bees and butterflies. <sup>12</sup>


Fruit consists of tan brown cypselas (achenes, 2–4 mm long) each topped with a copious white pappus (1–2 cm) of capillary bristles that facilitate wind dispersal across moist habitats. <sup>2,3,12</sup> This morphology supports its role as a classic early successional colonizer optimized for rapid establishment, prolific seed production, and ephemeral persistence in disturbed sites. <sup>3,9,12</sup>



*Cirsium brevistylum* basal leaf rosette<sup>10</sup>

**PROPAGATION DETAILS: FROM SEED**

Ecotype	Coastal ecotype from Clatsop Co, OR <sup>1</sup>
Propagation Goal	Plants <sup>1</sup> 
Propagation Method	Seeds <sup>1</sup>

	 <p>Cirsium brevistylum seeds <sup>7</sup></p>
Product Type	Container (plug) <sup>1</sup>
Stock Type	Stubby containers <sup>1</sup>
Time to Grow	Weeks <sup>1</sup>
Target Specifications	The target specifications are well-developed crowns, roots and rhizomes filling soil profile in container. <sup>1</sup>
Propagule Collection Instructions	It is important to find suitable habitats and to know the geographical distribution of the thistle. Methods to locate native thistles include plant survey records and native plant societies. <sup>14</sup> C. brevistylum flowers in the spring and summer, specifically in the months April-September, so this would be a good time for collection. <sup>4</sup> It is also important to note that hybridization can impact collection and seed fertility. For seed collection, thistle seeds are located at the top of the seed head and can be picked off by hand, wearing gloves as protection from the spiny stem. <sup>14</sup>
Propagule Processing/Propagule Characteristics	Seed viability is especially low in native thistle populations, so removing unviable seeds is key for precise planting rates. It is important to collect from as large a thistle population as possible (>1000 mature plants) to maintain genetic diversity, especially among hybridization. <sup>14</sup>
Pre-Planting Propagule Treatments	Cirsium brevistylum seeds are not dormant and readily germinate in warm or cool temperatures. With a cool treatment of 35 degrees F the germination rate rose to 71% from the 65% seen when the seeds were placed directly into the 75 degree warm growth chamber. The seeds in the cooler germinated after 4 weeks. <sup>1</sup>
Growing Area Preparation / Annual Practices for Perennial Crops	Stubby containers are the most suitable due to the fact this species grows from a taproot. For media, sandy, loamy, and clay soils all work. Suitable pH includes, mildly acidic, neutral, or basic. Mimicking natural conditions this species would grow in is important. It can grow in semi-shade or no shade and moist soil. <sup>11</sup>
Establishment Phase Details	N/A
Length of Establishment Phase	Germination usually takes place within 2 - 8 weeks at 20°C. <sup>9</sup>
Active Growth Phase	N/A
Length of Active Growth Phase	N/A
Hardening Phase	N/A

Length of Hardening Phase	N/A
Harvesting, Storage and Shipping	N/A
Length of Storage	N/A
Guidelines for Outplanting / Performance on Typical Sites	N/A
Other Comments	N/A
<b>INFORMATION SOURCES</b>	
Protocol Author	Miriam Wilson
Date Protocol Created or Updated	Created 4/25/26

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