

-State Species Abstract-  
-Wyoming Natural Diversity Database-

*CIRSIUM ARIDUM*  
CEDAR RIM THISTLE  
Family: Asteraceae

Status:

US Fish & Wildlife Service: None (Former C2 candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act.)

Agency Status: WY BLM Sensitive

Heritage Rank:

Global: G2Q                      State: S2  
WYNDD Plant List: State Endemic  
Very High Wyoming Significance

Description: Cedar Rim thistle is a perennial, taprooted herb with loosely to densely woolly-hairy stems up to 30 cm tall. Stem leaves are alternate, shallowly to deeply pinnately lobed, and decurrent. Spines on the leaf margins are 2-8 mm long. The leaf surface is loosely white to gray hairy above and densely white-woolly below. One to four heads of lavender flowers are crowded at the tip of the stem. The involucre is sparsely hairy to nearly glabrous and consists of long, spine-tipped outer bracts and spineless inner bracts. The fruit (achenes) are cream-colored with fine brown streaks and lack a yellow collar at the top.

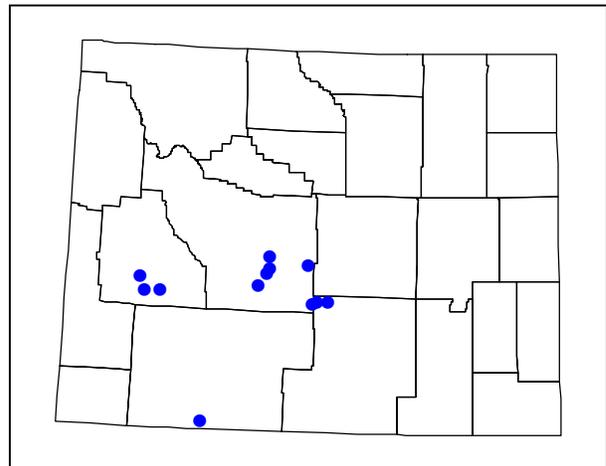
Similar Species: *Cirsium pulcherrimum* is usually taller, with greenish, glabrous upper leaf surfaces, and fruit with a distinctive yellow apical collar. Pubescent forms of *C. pulcherrimum* can be further distinguished by typically having a more elongate inflorescence of more than 4 flower heads and unclustered stems that are thickened at the base. *C. hookerianum* has densely pubescent involucre bracts and dark fruit. *C. subniveum* typically has a more open inflorescence with heads on woolly, spineless

stalks, short-clasping upper stem leaves and involucre with stringy hairs connecting adjacent bracts. *C. canescens* and *C. ochrocentrum* are Great Plains species with more deeply lobed leaves and squarish heads.

Flowering/Fruiting Period: June-July.

Distribution: State Endemic, restricted to the Green River Basin in Sublette County, Beaver Rim area of Fremont County, Sweetwater River Valley in Carbon County, and highlands on the east side of Flaming Gorge in Sweetwater County. Reports from the Great Divide Basin are based on mis-identified specimens (these have been found to be pubescent forms of *C. pulcherrimum*).

Habitat: Typically occurs on barren slopes, fans, and draws on whitish-gray sandstone, chalk, tufaceous colluvium, or clay substrates derived from the Split Rock, White River, Wagon Bed, Wind River, Green River, and Wasatch formations. Populations are found mostly in sparsely vegetated openings within Wyoming big sagebrush grasslands at 5800-7500 feet.



Rangewide distribution of *Cirsium aridum*

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from 12 extant occurrences in Wyoming, most

recently observed in 1999. Reported from 6 additional sites by Fertig (1995 a), but these populations were later found to represent pubescent forms of *C. pulcherrimum* by Robert Dorn and Fertig (1995 b).

Abundance: Fertig (1995 b) estimated the population to be 40,000-50,000 plants in an area of ca 150 acres. These estimates are probably conservative.

Trends: Populations are probably stable at present, although long-term trend data are lacking. This species may be capable of colonizing semi-disturbed roadsides in the Beaver Rim area and may actually be increasing locally.

Protection status: A small portion of one population is located within the Beaver Rim ACEC, managed by the BLM Lander Field Office. All other known populations are on public lands managed for multiple use. This species was formerly a C2 candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Threats: The main threat to this species may be herbicide spraying or release of biocontrol insects intended to control populations of Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) or musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*). Mineral development activities occur within much of the plant's range, but are usually confined to lower-lying areas not inhabited by the plant. Soil erosion or displacement of plants by off-road vehicles is also a potential threat. The plant is not readily grazed and does not appear to be impacted by livestock (Fertig 1995 a).

Managed Areas: Known occurrences are on lands managed by the BLM Lander, Pinedale, Rawlins and Rock Springs Field Offices. The taxonomic placement of this species remains controversial. Fertig (1995 a) suggested that *C. aridum* may represent a gray-leaved,

densely tomentose extreme of the more typically green-leaved, glabrate *C. PULCHERRIMUM*. This view is shared by Dr. David Keil, who is currently monographing the genus *Cirsium* for the "Flora of North America" project.

References:

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