

Stemless Thistle

Onopordum acaulon



Stemless thistle – large flower heads in centre



Maturing plant – flower head starting to form in centre



Several seedlings – note woolly hairs on leaves



Juvenile plant – leaves have developed spikey edges

Native to the western Mediterranean region.

Description

Leaves form as a large rosette that may spread to cover an area up to 60 cm or more in diameter. The numerous whitish-green leaves are densely covered in woolly hairs. They are deeply divided with numerous spiny waxy lobes.

Flowers are borne in globular flower heads 4 to 6 cm in diameter. Each head contains white or purple florets and is surrounded by sharp spines. Several flower heads are formed as a cluster at the centre of the rosette, close to the ground. The flower heads have no stalks.

Seeds are Grey or brown in colour and about 4 mm long. They are four-sided with a ridged seed coat and 25 mm long pappus (parachute) of pale barbed hairs. Seeds may remain dormant for several years. Several germinations are common during autumn-spring.

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