

**Bull Thistle** *Cirsium vulgare* (Savi) Ten.

This weed is found almost always on disturbed or degraded areas-- roadsides, ditches, fence lines, logged areas, vacant fields and lots, stream beds, overgrazed pastures, rangeland, and eroded gullies. Note that the heads are each single and terminal on a end of a stalk or stem. The heads are "hour glass" shaped, constricted where the flowers meet the involucre (A structure found mostly in thistles. It is the lower part of the head and holds the ovaries and pappi of the many flowers in the Asteraceae head. The Asteraceae family is one of the largest plant families in number of individual species. Plants of this family have many tiny flowers that are tightly clustered together. Asters, daisies, sunflowers, and thistles are in this family.) The involucre is shaped like an inverted old fashioned light bulb. (Photo by NM State Agricultural Extension Service)



Note the single, terminal heads and their "hour glass" shape. The heads do not droop. The leaves go all the way from the ground to the head, getting smaller as they go up. (Photo by NM State Agricultural Extension Service)

In this hand drawn illustration, note that two leaves directly subtend each head. There is no bare stem beneath each head like in many thistle species. The leaves are serrate, but teeth are small and have a shallow sinus between them. There are wings (flat extensions of plant tissue on both sides of a stem) on the stem, but only just below the leaves. These wings are deeply divided almost to the stem and appear to be separate, miniature leaves instead of continuous wings like those on Scotch thistle and yellow star thistle. Also in this illustration:

(Drawing by the US Department of Agriculture)



A. the carrot-like taproot.

B. a single flower.

C. a seed that is not completely developed yet with its pappus on top.

D. Fully developed seeds, one still has its pappus. and the other has lost its pappus. A pappus is the filamentous thing mounted on top of the ovary (seed). It is unique to the Asteraceae family.