

## Seen By A Seer

by J. Boswell Belcher, Dilke



NODDING THISTLE

The Nodding Thistle (*Carduus nutans* L.) in this picture was photographed on the road allowance about three-quarters of a mile north of the Edwards' ranch in the Arm River valley. The ranch is east of Findlater and about three-quarters of a mile off No. 11 Highway.

The first time I saw these spectacular thistles was in July, 1945, on S.W. ¼ 28-21-24 W2 on a field we were plowing which had been cultivated land abandoned for about five years. They were such sturdy, husky-looking plants that we were concerned about the possibility of having to contend with them as serious weeds. When I reported them to our Ag. Rep. (then W. J. Palmer), he told me of the occurrence of these thistles in the Davidson district where there was one quarter section heavily infested with them. Because this quarter section belonged to a farmer named Podratz, the thistle was locally known as "Podratz' Thistle." In the years since then, however, the Nodding Thistle has proven not to be a very prolific weed. These thistles cause no trouble

in cultivated fields or pasture land; in fact, even yet they only appear in isolated spots in our district.

A few years ago I read a report on the occurrence of the Nodding Thistle in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist* (68: 35, 1954) in which specimens were noted from the following Saskatchewan locations: Craven, Chamberlain, Craik, Davidson, Dundurn and Wilkie. Since all these stations with the exception of Wilkie are on the Canadian National Railway line from Regina to Saskatoon, and since Wilkie is a continuation of the same line running west from Saskatoon, the writers, G. A. Mulligan and C. Frankton, concluded that the railway was the means of dissemination. Because an Argentine plant illustrated and described by Cabrera (1941) appeared to be of this variety, the writers thought it possible that this thistle was introduced into Saskatchewan in rape seed of Argentine origin.

In our district, though classified as a weed, the Nodding Thistle seems to give no cause for alarm, but a large specimen in bloom is certainly a majestic and spectacular sight.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Carduus nutans* L.—Nodding Thistle is listed in August J. Breitung's *Annotated Catalogue of the Vascular Flora* (1957) with the following description of range: "Waste places and roadsides. Craik, Davidson, Renown (UNS); Wilkie, Craven, Dundurn (DAO). Reported from Mortlach by Hudson in *Can. Field-Nat.* 65: 209, 1951."

Do you know this thistle and what is your experience with it? If you can add to the information contained in this article we would appreciate hearing from you. Please give the exact land location and the size of the infestation in your area now. Tell us whether the weed first appeared in a field, along a road or highway, or on a railway right-of-way. We would be interested in knowing when the weed first appeared and how rapidly it is spreading. Are you alarmed at the way the plant is spreading in Saskatchewan? If you think that steps to eradicate this weed should be taken please give your reasons and suggestions.