

# New Invaders Watch Program

## Early Detection and Rapid Response Network

COMMON NAME: **GREAT (BLUE) GLOBE THISTLE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Echinops sphaerocephalus*

FAMILY: Asteraceae

ORIGIN: Europe and West Asia

US INTRODUCTION: As an ornamental garden plant

MAJOR PATHWAYS OF SPREAD:

- Distribution and use for ornamental gardens



Flower head and close-up of flowers

IDENTIFICATION CHARACTERISTICS:

- Herbaceous perennial, erect and clump forming, 2.5 to 3 feet tall, spreads by seed
- Stems simple to much branched with glands and dense hairs
- Leaves basal and along the stem, alternate and clasping on stem; blades oblong-elliptic, leaf edges with spines on the tips of leaf lobes, lower leaf surface with dense gray hairs, upper surface green
- Inflorescence ball-shaped at end of stems and branches, 1.2 to 2.5 inches in diameter made up of small, ± 100 flowers, flowers white to pale blue
- Threat is uncertain, possibly upland prairies, especially hill and dry prairies, grows in full sun



Leaves front side (left) and backside (right)



Plant

NATIVE LOOK-ALIKES:

Flower heads of great globe thistle could be mistaken for native rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*). Rattlesnake master leaves are long and strap-like, rather stiff in texture, often curve downward, and have parallel venation. Rattlesnake master inflorescences are whitish green prickly balls of flowers about 1 inch across, smaller than great globe thistle.



Flower heads of rattlesnake master



Leaf of rattlesnake master



Leaf of great globe thistle



Seed head of great globe thistle

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

USDA Plants Database.  
<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=ECSP>

Missouri Plants.  
[http://www.missouriplants.com/Whitealt/Echinops\\_sphaerocephalus\\_page.html](http://www.missouriplants.com/Whitealt/Echinops_sphaerocephalus_page.html)