



*Silybum marianum*

Family: *Asteraceae/Compositae* (members include daisy, dandelion and calendula)  
Parts used: seeds (other parts can be used as a survival food)

Other names include Our Lady's thistle, blessed milk thistle, wild artichoke and Saint Mary's thistle. For more than 2,000 years milk thistle seeds have been used to support and heal the liver and connecting conditions. "Silymarin (found in milk thistle seeds) benefits the liver in several ways. It binds tightly to the receptors on liver cell membranes that allow toxins in, thus locking them out." *The New Healing Herbs*

**Properties:** hepatic trophorestorative (re-establishes balance of the cellular structure of the liver), hepatoprotectant (liver support), antihepatotoxic (protects liver from toxic substances), galactagogue (milk flow), demulcent (relieves and protects irritated tissue) cholagogue (stimulates bile flow), antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, cooling.

#### Uses:

- Liver tonic, support, and protection.
- Can help restore liver function impaired by liver diseases such as toxin exposure, cirrhosis, viral hepatitis, alcohol damage, drug induced liver damage, mushroom poisoning, etc.
- Liver cell regeneration.
- Liver cleansing and rebuilding.
- Stimulates liver repair, blocks toxins from entering the liver and protects it from free radicals.
- Jaundice, liver enlargement, and liver congestion.
- Gallbladder problems, including gallstones.

- Fibroids, linked to liver problems so stimulating it may help shrink fibroids.

### Methods of Use:

- tincture
- powdered, capsules
- tea (crush seeds first and then make a decoction)

### Care/Harvesting:

Milk thistle can be cultivated in your yard by planting seeds in the fall or you can find it growing wild in disturbed areas, waysides and mountain trails.

- Seeds can be harvested in the fall when the blossom head dries, and seeds are visible. Cut the tops and use your [method of choice](#) to dry the for a couple of weeks before removing the seeds by placing in a bag and shaking or rubbing them out with your fingers.
- Leaves can be harvested for survival food by stripping off the spiny green part, leaving the midrib, rub off wooly hairs then eat raw or cook.
- Stalk should be harvested in the spring while tender. Hold upside down and cut off green parts, exposing the inner stalk which can be eaten raw or cooked.
- Flowers should be harvested before opening. Cook them first then squeeze out the core and eat like an artichoke.
- Roots can be dug and harvested anytime for survival food.

Disclaimer: The Information contained on this handout is for educational purposes only and as a guideline for your personal use. It is not intended to replace the advice of a licensed physician. Those who follow these suggestions do so at their own risk.