

Silybum marianum
Family: *Compositae* – daisy, calendula
Parts used: seeds

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

Antihepatotoxic (protects liver from toxic substances), antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, cholagogue, demulcent, galactagogue, hepatic, hepatoprotectant (liver support), trophorestorative (re-establishes balance of the cellular structure of the liver).

Energetics: cooling
Systems Affected: liver

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.

Herb Preparations

- Tincture
- Powdered, capsules
- Tea (crush seeds first and then make a decoction)

Wildcrafting/Harvesting

A common weed found growing 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 them for a couple of weeks before removing the seeds by placing in a bag and shaking or rubbing them out with your fingers.