

COMMON HAWTHORN

LATIN NAME

Crataegus monogyna

SYNONYMS

Mayblossom

Whitethorn

Thornapple

FAMILY

Rose family

(*Rosaceae*)

SPECIES

It is estimated that there are over 200 species of hawthorn. The common ones used in herbal medicine are:

Crataegus monogyna

C. oxyacanthoides

C. laevigata

MEDICINAL PARTS

Flowering tops and berries

WHERE FOUND

Hedges in Europe and North America

The state flower of Missouri.

DOSE

1-2 teaspoons of leaves and flowers to 1 cup of boiling water. Infuse for 5 minutes.

Young hawthorn leaves have a rich nutty flavour. Eat them straight from the tree or in a salad. The flowers and buds are also lovely sprinkled on salads or as a tea.

Medicinal uses: The flowering tops, and in autumn the berries, are used in herbal medicine for:

- lowering blood pressure and blood cholesterol
- Increasing the blood flow through the heart and the coronary arteries
- strengthening heart muscle function without increasing pulse rate or raising blood pressure
- improving exercise tolerance and lowering blood pressure and heart rate during exercise
- aiding sleep and relaxation

Side effects: Overdose can cause low blood pressure, nausea and sedation.

Ecology and folklore: Hawthorns provide food and shelter for many birds and animals. The flowers are important for nectar-feeding insects, and the berries for wildlife in winter, particularly thrushes and waxwings. They are often used as hedge plants and are valued in water conservation landscapes, often found growing next to holy wells.

The Scottish saying "Ne'er cast a clout til Mey's oot" warns not to shed any clothes before the hawthorn blossoms. Hawthorn has been regarded as an emblem of hope, and was carried by the ancient Greeks in wedding processions. It is also said to heal a broken heart. In Gaelic tradition, hawthorn 'marks the entrance to the otherworld', and is strongly associated with the fairies.

