

Hawthorn(Crataegus)

Common Name: cragaegus.

Description: Fresh berries, leaves and flowers, as well as these portions of the herb dried are used medicinally.

Properties: This herb is known for its aiding in the treatment of circulatory disorders and heart ailments.

Uses: Hawthorn can be used to treat Alzheimer's disease, angina, memory loss, cardiac arrhythmia, congestive heart failure, fractures, arthritis, osteoporosis, heart attack, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, atherosclerosis, attention deficit disorder(ADD), glaucoma, bloodshot eyes, swollen ankles, halitosis, varicose veins, leukemia, lupus and diabetic retinopathy.

Doses: This herb can be found in capsule, tincture, tea and tablet form.

Warnings: This herb can cause faintness due to its affect on blood pressure levels. Consult with your doctor before taking hawthorn if you are pregnant, under the age of puberty or nursing

## Hawthorn Berries and Powder Profile

### Also known as

Crataegus laevigata (Midland hawthorn), Crataegus monogyna (English hawthorn), Aubepine, Bianco Spino, Crataegi Fructus, Crataegus cuneata, Crataegus oxyacantha, Crataegus pinnatifida, English Hawthorn, Epine Blanche, Epine de Mai, Haagdorn, Hagedorn, Harthorne, Haw, Hawthorne, Hedgethorn, May, Maybush, Maythorn, Mehlbeebaum, Meidorn, Nan Shanzha, Oneseed Hawthorn, Shanzha, Weissdorn, Whitehorn.

### Introduction

The folklore and legends surrounding the hawthorn tree is quite large, and goes back many centuries, especially in Europe and the British Isles. The most famous hawthorn in Britain is the Holy Thorn of Glastonbury, which grows at Glastonbury Tor, the supposed resting place of King Arthur. According to legend, the tree was grown after Joseph of Arimathea, upon arriving at Glastonbury Tor, thrust his staff into the ground, and from this the tree grew. Although the original is no longer there, several of its supposed descendents still grow there. When it blooms during the winter, a sprig is traditionally sent to the Queen, who is said to decorate her breakfast table on Christmas morning. Hawthorn fruit has long been used as a food and medicine in Europe; particularly Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, where it ranks as one of the most popularly used botanical medicines, especially for treating declining heart function. Many clinical studies have been conducted on hawthorn over the past 20 years with great promise. The berry is a yellowish brown to wine-red, oval, wrinkled, and berry-like fruit (actually a pome).

### Constituents

Flavonoids and oligomeric procyanidins. The berries contain more hyperoside than the leaves and flowers, and the leaves and flowers contain more vitexin rhamnoside than the berries.

## Parts Used

The whole berry, dried, crushed and powdered

## Typical Preparations

Hawthorn berries are more often used to make tinctures than teas, smoothies and punches. May also be taken encapsulated or as an extract.

## Summary

Hawthorn berries are antispasmodic, cardiac, diuretic, sedative, tonic and vasodilator. Like hawthorn leaves and flowers, hawthorn berries have a hypotensive effect as well as acting as a direct and mild heart tonic. The traditional use of hawthorn berries is the treatment of weak heart combined with high blood pressure. The berries are also used to treat a heart muscle weakened by age, for inflammation of the heart muscle, for arteriosclerosis, and for nervous heart. The effect of hawthorn berry on these heart conditions is not immediate; it may be necessary to take the herb for 4 to 6 weeks to see results. Leaf and flower preparations may work faster, but hawthorn berries are better for some specific problems. A specific use for hawthorn berries is the treatment of orthostatic hypotension, a sudden loss of blood pressure caused by moving from a seated position to a standing position. Orthostatic hypotension can cause temporary loss of consciousness, and is a common complication during the first few weeks of medical treatment of high blood pressure with beta-blockers. A tincture made from a combination of hawthorn berries and camphor will not eliminate orthostatic hypotension, but it will reduce it enough that it does not cause swooning or fainting. Another often-overlooked use of hawthorn berries - this time as a tea - is treatment irritable bowel syndrome. Making a cup of tea with no more than a half-teaspoon of crushed, dried berries can relieve the constipation and gas associated with the condition. Kampo (Japanese herbal) medicine often uses crushed hawthorn berries with other herbs to treat colitis diarrhea caused by Crohn's disease, and various conditions causing rectal bleeding.

## Precautions

Taken in excess, hawthorn berry teas can cause mild diarrhea. This does not occur when the berries are used to make tinctures or are encapsulated. Diarrhea is not a side effect of the leaf and flowers. Taken in excess, hawthorn berry soft drinks, especially if they are made with the powder, can cause mild diarrhea. (Rice is added to the blend to prevent stomach upset.) Diarrhea does not occur as a result of using the herb when the berry powder is used to make tinctures or are encapsulated. Diarrhea is not a side effect of the leaf and flowers.

## Hawthorn Leaf and Flower

### Also known as

*Crataegus laevigata* (Midland hawthorn), *Crataegus monogyna* (English hawthorn), Aubepine, Bianco

Spino, Crataegi Fructus, Crataegus cuneata, Crataegus oxyacantha, Crataegus pinnatifida, English Hawthorn, Epine Blanche, Epine de Mai, Haagdorn, Hagedorn, Harthorne, Haw, Hawthorne, Hedgethorn, May, Maybush, Maythorn, Mehlbeebaum, Meidorn, Nan Shanzha, Oneseed Hawthorn, Shanzha, Weissdorn, Whitehorn.

## **Introduction**

The hawthorn is a heart herb in the rose family. It's white to brownish flowers and combined with its deeply lobed, rose-like leaves, and brown woody stems for use in teas and tinctures to treat the heart. The legends surrounding hawthorn trees go back centuries. Thomas the Rhymer, a 13th century mystic and poet, was said to have met the Fairy Queen underneath a hawthorn tree. Particularly sacred is any grove with oak, ash, and hawthorn, as it is said this is where the fairy folk reside. The hawthorn tree is a symbol of love and the union of couples in marriage, and is one of the sacred trees of the Wiccan religion. And if on May Day one was to bathe in the dew of hawthorn leaves and blossoms, ones luck, health, and beauty was said to increase exponentially for the following year.

## **Constituents**

Flavonoids and oligomeric procyanidins, rutin, catechols, pheno-carboxylic acids (especially chlorogenic acid), sterols, amines, coumadins, and purines. The leaves and flowers contain more vitexin rhamnoside than the berries, and the berries contain more hyperoside than the leaves and flowers. Leaves contain the highest concentrations of flavonoids if they are harvested just before the plant blooms. Plants that grow during drought and after late frosts contain the highest concentrations of antioxidants (protecting the plant just as they protect cellular structures in the human body).

## **Parts Used**

Leaf, flower, and stem.

## **Typical Preparations**

Hawthorn leaf and flower are more often used to make teas than tincture, however a tincture or even a capsule may suffice for convenience.

## **Summary**

Hawthorn leaf and flower, like hawthorn berries, are antispasmodic, cardiac, diuretic, sedative, tonic and vasodilator. Like hawthorn berries, hawthorn leaf and flower has a hypotensive effect as well as acting as a direct and mild heart tonic. There is considerable clinical evidence that hawthorn leaf and flower is an effective treatment for mild coronary insufficiency, when there is pressure and tightness in the chest accompanied by a slow heart rate and symptoms of congestive heart failure. The flavonoids in the leaf and flower improve circulation in the heart and increase the myocardium's ability to withstand oxygen deprivation. Leaf and flowers from the species of hawthorn used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (*Crataegus sinaica*) stimulate the immune system to produce complement to fight infection.

# Precautions

None.

**Botanical:** *Crataegus oxyacantha* (LINN.)

**Family:** N.O. Rosaceae

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---**Synonyms**---May. Mayblossom. Quick. Thorn. Whitethorn. Haw. Hazels. Gazels. Halves. Hagthorn. Ladies' Meat. Bread and Cheese Tree.

(*French*) L'épine noble

(*German*) Hagedorn

---**Part Used**---Dried haws or fruits.

---**Habitat**---Europe, North Africa, Western Asia.

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---**Description**---The Hawthorn is the badge of the Ogilvies and gets one of its commonest popular names from blooming in May. Many country villagers believe that Hawthorn flowers still bear the smell of the Great Plague of London. The tree was formerly regarded as sacred, probably from a tradition that it furnished the Crown of Thorns. The device of a Hawthorn bush was chosen by Henry VII because a small crown from the helmet of Richard III was discovered hanging on it after the battle of Bosworth, hence the saying, 'Cleve to thy Crown though it hangs on a bush.' The Hawthorn is called *Crataegus Oxyacantha* from the Greek *kratos*, meaning hardness (of the wood), *oxcus* (sharp), and *akantha* (a thorn). The German name of *Hagedorn*, meaning Hedgethorn, shows that from a very early period the Germans divided their land into plots by hedges; the word *haw* is also an old word for hedge. The name Whitethorn arises from the whiteness of its bark and Quickset from its growing as a quick or living hedge, in contrast to a paling of dead wood.

This familiar tree will attain a height of 30 feet and lives to a great age. It possesses a single seed-vessel to each blossom producing a separate fruit, which when ripe is a brilliant red and this is in miniature a stony apple. In some districts these mealy red fruits are called Pixie Pears, Cuckoo's Beads and Chucky Cheese. The flowers are mostly fertilized by carrion insects, the suggestion of decomposition in the perfume attracts those insects that lay their eggs and hatch out their larvae in decaying animal matter.

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---**Constituents**---In common with other members of the Prunus and Pyrus groups of the order Rosaceae, the Hawthorn contains Amygdalin. The bark contains the alkaloid Crataegin, isolated in greyish-white crystals, bitter in taste, soluble in water, with difficulty in alcohol and not at all in ether.

---**Medicinal Action and Uses**---Cardiac, diuretic, astringent, tonic. Mainly used as a cardiac tonic in

organic and functional heart troubles. Both flowers and berries are astringent and useful in decoction to cure sore throats. A useful diuretic in dropsy and kidney troubles.

**---Preparation and dosage---**Fluid Extract of Berries, 10 to 15 drops.

The leaves have been used as an adulterant for tea. An excellent liqueur is made from Hawthorn berries with brandy.

Formerly the timber, when of sufficient size, was used for making small articles. The root-wood was also used for making boxes and combs; the wood has a fine grain and takes a beautiful polish. It makes excellent fuel, making the hottest wood-fire known and used to be considered more desirable than Oak for oven-heating. Charcoal made from it has been said to melt pig-iron without the aid of a blast.

The stock is employed not only for grafting varieties of its own species, but also for several of the garden fruits closely allied to it, such as the medlar and pear.

**---Other Species---**

*C. Aronia* is a bushy species giving larger fleshy fruit than *C. Oxyacantha*. It is indigenous to Southern Europe and Western Asia and is common about Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, where its fruit is used for preserves.

*C. odoratissima* is very agreeable also as a fruit.

*C. Azarole*. Its fruit in the same way is highly esteemed in Southern Europe.