

BLESSED THISTLE

Common Names:

Holy Thistle, St Benedict's Thistle, Ash Sherka Al Mubarak, Cardo Santo, Chardon Beni, Derga Peroza, Mubarek Diken,

Botanical Name:

Cnicus benedictus

Parts used:

Aerial portions (the leaves and flowering tops)

Active Components:

Cnicin, a diterpenoid lactone. Mucilage. Flavonoids. Volatile oil. Alkaloids. Tannins. Nicotinic acid. Resin.

History:

Widely cultivated in the middle ages, the Blessed Thistle was seen as a cure-all for all kinds of diseases including the plague. The plant, praised for its medicinal powers in William Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing", was recommended in early herbal treatises as a remedy for migraines and other headaches. Today it is no longer as popular but it is still seen to have a wide range of applications.

Looks like:

Blessed Thistle plant grows up to 2 feet in height. It is covered with tiny spines that are rather painful when they get stuck in the skin.

Where it's grown:

It grows best in dry, sunny places in a fertile, stony and waste ground. That is why it is generally found along roadsides and in wastelands. The plant is harvested in the summer as it flowers and then dried.

S. Europe to W. Asia; Czech Republic; Slovakia; France; Iraq; Italy; Kurdistan; South Africa; Spain; Turkey; USA

Use:

Blessed Thistle is used to strengthen the heart, and is useful in all remedies for lung, kidney, gall bladder and especially liver problems. It is also used as a brain food for stimulating the memory and in remedies for menopause and for menstrual cramping. Lactating women often use this herb to stimulate blood flow to the mammary glands and to increase the flow of milk. Blessed Thistle is also used for various digestive problems as it stimulates the production of saliva and digestive juices. Often it is used internally in the treatment of anorexia and for cases of poor appetite associated with depression, dyspepsia, flatulent colic etc. but it can also be used externally in the treatment of wounds and ulcers.

