

QUICK REFERENCE SHEET

MILK THISTLE

Silybum marianum



Part Utilized:
Leaf or Seed



PROPERTIES:

Antifibrotic (prevents tissue scarring), Anti-inflammatory

SYSTEMS AFFECTED:

Liver, Kidney, Cardiovascular, Glandular (pancreas), Nervous, Brain

POSSIBLE USES:

irritable bowel syndrome, liver cleanse and healing, diabetes

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Silymarin, a group of compounds, is the active ingredient which provides many of the potent health benefits attributed to Milk Thistle. Besides preventing scarring, it is thought to inhibit the binding of toxins to liver tissue. Silymarin is also used to treat alcoholic liver disease, acute and chronic viral hepatitis, and toxin-induced liver diseases.

Silymarin is said to prevent the growth of cancer cells in the prostate, breast, and cervix but there are not scientific studies that I could find that bear this out. However, anecdotal evidence is often the only “proof” that we have of the health benefits of herbal products.

Silymarin is also believed to help with diabetes, especially with patients that have become insulin resistant.

Milk Thistle is strongly anti-inflammatory and seems to have an affinity for the large intestine as it has been used many times, with good results, for irritable bowel syndrome. This effect may be brought about by the same two properties—drawing toxins out of the body and being anti-inflammatory—that make it effective for gallbladder issues. These properties are attributed to the antioxidants found in Milk Thistle.

There may be some silymarin in the leaves of Milk Thistle, but silymarin is not water soluble, so the health benefits due to the silymarin content of Milk Thistle tea are limited.