

Common Name: **Blessed Thistle**

Genus: *Cnicus*

Species: *benedictus*

Family: Asteraceae

AKA: Holy thistle, *Carduus benedictus*



Historical Uses:

Medical: “Blessed Thistle taken in meat or drinke, is good for the swimming and giddinesse of the head, it strengtheneth memorie, and is a singular remedie against deafnesse. The same boiled in wine and drunke hot, healeth the griping paines of the belly, killeth and expelleth wormes, causeth sweat, provoketh urine, and driueth out gravel, clenseth the stomack, and is very good against the fever quartaine. The juice of the said *Carduus* is singular good against all poison. The powder of the leaves ministred in the quantitie of half a dram, is good against the pestilence, if it be received within 24 hours after taking of the sickness.” (1)

“Thistle is warm. Let whoever has eaten or drunk poison pulverize the head, roots and leaves of thistle. Consume this powder either in food or drink; it will expel the poison. If someone has a rash on the body, let the person mix this powder with fresh fat and anoint himself or herself with it; the person will be healed.” (2)

“It is a herb of Mars, and under the Sign Aries. It helps swimmings and giddiness in the head, or the disease called vertigo, because Aries is the House of Mars. It is an excellent remedy against yellow jaundice and other infirmities of the gall, because Mars governs choller. It strengthens the attractive faculty in man, and clarifies the blood, because the one is ruled by Mars. The continual drinking the decoction of it helps red faces, tetter and ringworm, because Mars causeth them. It helps plague-sores, boils and itch, the bitings of mad dogs and venomous beasts, all which infirmities are under Mars. Thus you see what it doth by sympathy. 'By Antypathy to other Planets: it cures the French Pox by Antypathy to Venus who governs it. It strengthens the memory and cures deafness by Antypathy to Saturn, who hath his fall in



Aries which Rules the Head. It cures Quarten Agues and other diseases of Melancholy, and a dust Choller by Sympathy to Saturn, Mars being exalted in Capricorn. Also it provokes Urine, the stopping of which is usually caused by Mars or the Moon.” (3)

Other: “The name *Cnicus* comes from the Greek *knekos* meaning thistle, which in turn may be derived from *chnizein*, “to injure” referring to the plant’s extreme prickliness.”(4) Originally cultivated in monastery gardens as a medicinal herb, was once regarded as a cure-all, and in the 16th century was recommended for the plague (5).

Folklore/Astrology: “Plant belongs to Mars. By antipathy to the influence of Venus, it strengthens the memory and, in opposition, to Saturn, cures deafness.” (6)



3
Close-up of the flower

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Flower tops

Medicinal: A very bitter antiseptic, antibiotic herb that acts mainly as a digestive tonic. It is also a mild expectorant, checks bleeding, encourages healing, lowers fevers, and stimulates lactation. Internally for anorexia, poor appetite associated with depression, dyspepsia, flatulence, colic, diarrhea, excess mucus and insufficient lactation (7).

Cautions: Sharp spines.

Area of Origin: Mediterranean region into Iran

Physical description:

Plant type: Annual

Height: 10”-26”

Flower color: Yellow

Flowering period: Summer

Soil type/requirements: Well-drained soil

Fruit: Brown, ribbed fruits

Hardiness zone: Hardy annual

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: By seed in spring



4
Flower after blooming

Bibliography

1. Gerard, p. 1171
2. Von Bingen, p. 91
3. Culpeper, p. 179
4. Bown, p. 174
5. Ibid
6. Anderson, p. 83
7. Bown, p. 174

Illustrations:

1. Drach Herbal 1490-1495
2. PSUMG 2011
3. PSUMG 2011
4. PSUMG 2011