Hawthorn (*Crataegus*), is also known as quickthorn, thornapple, May-tree, or hawberry. The *Crataegus* genus holds several hundred species of small trees or shrubs that are native throughout temperate regions of Europe, Asia, North Africa, and North America. *Crataegus* belong to the rose or Rosaceae family of plants. In fact, the berries or small fruits resemble rosehips more than other berries or tree fruits.

The small fruits are packed with nutrients and the fruit, leaves, and flowers have famously been used in herbal remedies and in Traditional Chinese Medicine for centuries. Most notably, hawthorn has been used in teas and tinctures to aid digestive issues, heart problems, and high blood pressure.

**The wood of hawthorn** is incredibly strong and has been used to make tools and tool handles. The sharp thorns were used as fishhooks and as medical tools for piercing boils. Due to the hardwood and sharp thorns, hawthorn shrubs are often used as living protective fencing when grown in hedges.

**High in pectin, hawthorn fruit** is a useful addition when making jams and jellies. Many cultures use hawthorn in snack foods and as ingredients in liqueurs, beverages, wine making, and candy. Even the leaves are edible and can be picked in spring when they are still young and tender to use in salads.

An important wildlife food as well, Hawthorns are used as food and shelter by many birds and mammals. The flower's nectar feeds many insects including moths and butterflies. In the winter, many birds eat the remaining haws which help to disperse the seeds.

**The History of Hawthorn**

The richness in historical lore of *Crataegus* species is incredibly robust. This may be due to the fact that these small trees and shrubs grow throughout the temperate regions of the world since ancient times. Not only that but the plant, its flowers, fruit, and leaves are each incredibly useful.

In North America, fruits were used as food and medicine since time immemorial by many indigenous peoples. In addition to eating the fruit fresh, the pulp of the fruits was mashed and dried in cakes or used as an ingredient of pemican.

As a fruit that persists on the branches into the winter season, hawthorns have probably been a survival food throughout human history. In fact, during the days of the pioneers, settlers noted this was the only remaining food supply in some areas.

Perhaps, for this reason, there is much evidence in folklore that hawthorns in bloom were celebrated, and destruction of hawthorn bushes or trees was dreaded as signs of bad luck. There is a strong association of hawthorn plants with fairies in several medieval cultures. In the Victorian
language of flowers, hawthorn blossoms represent hope. Currently, hawthorn is the state flower of Missouri.

Since the fruit persists into the winter months, many winter celebration foods worldwide have hawthorn as an ingredient. There are many traditions of healing ceremonies using this interesting plant as well.

**Where the Plant is Found**

Hawthorns are often found growing in hedgerows or around old garden spaces. In the wild, they grow in mixed forests. They prefer moist, deep soils which are usually fine-textured and rich in organic matter.

Supplements, extracts, and dried plant parts may be available through herbal supplies, online stores, or health food stores.


**How to Identify Crataegus**

- **Shape:** Many Crataegus species are small trees or shrubs growing 15 to 50 feet tall.
- **Leaves:** Leaves are arranged spirally along shoots and in small clusters on spurs of branches. Oval with scalloped margins, leaves are shiny green on the upper surface and pale green underneath with distinct veins.
- **Flower:** A symbol of hope, five-petaled flowers bloom in clusters in white, pink, or red in early spring.
- **Stem:** The bark is grey and smooth with longitudinal ridges in mature specimens. Sharp thorns arise on stems and branches and are often ½ to 1 inch long.
- **Fruit & Seeds:** The fruit or haw of hawthorns are similar to rose hips with thick skin, mushy pulp, and large stone-like seeds.

[Related: Plant Identification Guide – 400 Wild Plants That You Can Forage For](https://thelostherbs.com/hawthorn/) (Video)

**How to Grow**

Hawthorns prefer rich soil which holds moisture that is high in organic matter but still drains well. They grow well in full sun and tolerate part shade in most soil types with a variety of pH levels. They have some disease susceptibility to apple scabs, and fire blight as well as some leaf issues and types of rust. There are disease-resistant varieties. Keeping your hawthorn healthy with plenty of organic matter and minimizing stress from competition, drought, or environmental damage may help your hawthorn weather these cyclic plant diseases.
Hawthorn trees and shrubs don’t need a lot of pruning but removing suckers to keep trees neat and tidy may be beneficial. Remove thorn-covered branches from areas visited by people as the thorns can be sharp and painful.

Related: The 10 Medicinal Seeds You Should Plant for a Complete Backyard Pharmacy (Video)

How to Harvest This Plant

- Harvesting hawthorn flowers can be done in early spring. Of course, flowers become the haws so harvest sparingly.
- The leaves, as mentioned above, are edible and tender when young. They can be harvested with the flowers for an interesting addition to salads.
- The haws are ripe when dark in color, often in the last weeks of summer and early fall. Again, harvest only a small amount from anyone tree, especially if shrubs and trees are scarce. Leaves for tea can be harvested at any time. Inspect them for any damage, spots, or rust as this will change the beneficial characteristics of the leaves.

What Hawthorn Is Good For and The Natural Remedies Made From It

- Hawthorn has a bounty of benefits, famously aiding cardiovascular and digestive issues for centuries. They can be eaten raw. Some say the haws have a tart to sweet taste while others report them being sour to bland. This variation could depend on harvest time, species of hawthorn, and growing conditions.
- Tea made with hawthorn has been reported to have many healthful benefits. Commercial hawthorn teas often combine dried haws, flowers, and leaves. It is certainly possible to make your own hawthorn tea or add hawthorn to your favorite homemade herbal tea combinations.
- Highly nutritious, including hawthorn in the diet is one way to use this nutritious food which contains many phytochemicals including tannins, phenolic acids, proanthocyanidins, and flavonoids. Hawthorn is often an ingredient in jam, jelly, pie filling, and syrup. They can also be made into fermented tasty beverages such as wine or vinegar to be used in salad dressing.
- Supplements containing hawthorn may be an easy and convenient way to increase hawthorn in your diet by using powder, pill, or liquid forms. These may be available through a pharmacy or health food supplier.

Related: “Nature’s Prozac” Or The Instant Anxiety Relief Plant That Could Be Growing Near Your House (Video)
What Parts of Hawthorn Are Used In Remedies?

Extracts made from the berries or haws of hawthorn have shown incredible symptom benefits for treating chronic heart failure and cardiovascular disease. The extracts made, not only from berries but also using leaves and flowers show excellent potential in providing antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, gastroprotective, and antimicrobial activity.

Perhaps due to the high quantities of beneficial phytochemicals, leaves, flowers, and berries are still used in many traditional medicines to help treat high blood pressure, arrhythmia, a variety of digestive issues as well as arteriosclerosis and heart conditions. There is further evidence that these extracts contribute to lowered cholesterol levels as well.

Studies also show the natural polyphenolic compounds found in hawthorn berries, particularly the fruit’s skin, have chemoprotective potential.

A DIY Hawthorn Tincture Recipe

We are making a simple herbal extraction in alcohol. We are using high-quality alcohol as our extractor. Alcohol has an incredible solvent ability to extract the beneficial components from plants at room temperature over a reasonably short period of time, making them shelf-stable. Other ingredients can work as extractors, even water such as when we make tea. Vegetable-based glycerin is also a popular option.

We will be using the simple or folk method. This is relatively easy and requires only basic equipment. Essentially, we put our plant material in a glass container, cover it with alcohol, and allow it to steep for several weeks.

Method

Step 1: Identify your hawthorn trees and shrubs for your future harvest area. Note the scalloped leaves and long, sharp thorns. This picture was taken earlier in the season while the haws were just developing.

Step 2: Once the fruit or haws are dark in color, collect some with the nice thick leaves.

Step 3: Gather the haws and leaves. Note, some of the haws are a little worse for wear after our long drought and heatwave. For this purpose, haw raisins are still excellent. Also, for those exceptional people who harvested some flowers and young leaves in the spring and dried them, here is a perfect time to bring them out and add them to our extraction tincture.

Step 4: You might choose to rip some of the leaves to expose more surface area. Similarly, cutting into some of the haws to expose their soft pulpy insides is great to extract even more of their powerful benefits.

Step 5: Place the plant material into a clean, sterilized glass container. Cover with your desired choice of alcohol and stir the mixture slightly before sealing the contents.

Step 6: Keep the tincture in a cool dark place for 2 to 6 weeks. Check on it periodically to give it a little agitation and stir. Strain the
mixture and keep it in a container that is easy to store and easy to use such as a brown dropper bottle.

**Potential Uses**

Use hawthorn tincture daily to potentially aid digestion and help lower blood pressure, reduce cholesterol, and strengthen the cardiovascular system. Add a couple of drops of this tincture to 1 cup of water or juice a couple of times a day. Monitor the effects. If any unwanted side effects occur, discontinue use. See warnings and cautions and take care to manage prescription medications appropriately.

**Related:** [How to Recognize a Heart Attack and What to Do Next (Video)](https://thelostherbs.com/hawthorn/)

**Dosage**

Doses of hawthorn are variable between different brands, suppliers, and supplements. A typical dose is along the lines of 250 to 500 mg, three times daily. One report states that a minimum effective dose of hawthorn extract is 300 mg daily for heart failure.

**How To Preserve This Plant**

- Flowers and early spring leaves are best dried to use in the fall with the fall harvested leaves and fruit.
- Leaves and fruit harvested in the fall can be preserved in several ways. Drying is often the most convenient. This makes the plant parts available for future use as food, tea, or to use in tinctures or other forms of extracts.
- The fruit can be used fresh to make preserves such as jams, jellies, and pie filling. They can also be preserved in wine or vinegar making.
- Fresh fruit and leaves can be made into an alcohol extraction or tincture for medicinal use. In abundance, they can be used for making a flavorful liqueur.

**What Plants Resemble Hawthorn?**

**Warnings And Cautions**

Choose reputable sources when purchasing supplements which include hawthorn. As hawthorn may aid high blood pressure, talk to your doctor if you are taking medications to lower blood pressure or any other medication that may be contraindicated with hawthorn supplementation. Pay attention to mild side effects such as nausea and dizziness.
As always, check with your healthcare provider before starting new herbal remedies.

You may also like:

10 Natural Remedies You Can Only Make This Fall
An Ingenious Way to Stockpile Prescription Medicines, Including Insulin (Video)
9 Natural Remedies for High Cholesterol and Blood Pressure
The Backyard Plant that Keeps Your Heart Young
10 Berries You Should Look For In The Woods
Comments

**LadyAleta** – 2022-03-10 09:22:15
Following

**samantha payne** – 2021-11-09 13:01:56
I was told the seeds are toxic, does anyone know if this is true? If so what's the best way of separating the seed from pulp?

**TM** – 2021-09-24 18:08:37
Check out Wim Hoff- cold treatments (shower, or cold swimming), increases testosterone and increases muscle, not to mention really boosting the immune system. It's working for my man, it's noticeable.

**Lyn** – 2021-09-21 14:46:28
I never knew that the Hawthorn was so beneficial! They line our streets here in WA St!

**Lyn** – 2021-09-21 14:44:38
Interesting story, too bad there's not more where you live. We have them all over the PNW!

**Jean-Marc** – 2021-09-21 04:35:39
Yeah really! My bro's got plenty of these trees but didn't know about their healing properties... Gonna pic up yhe fruits next week and flowers in springtime.. :)

https://thelostherbs.com/hawthorn/
Traditionally the berry in Ireland off the Hawthorn was always boiled and put in a jar with sugar for a high source of vitamin C and as a cough syrup. I remember distinctly as a boy eating the leaves raw in the spring when we were hungry. I was always told not to eat the berries raw as they’d make you sick, The old people had some really weird traditions about the sacredness of the tree and a total fear of doing anything bad to it particularly in the month of May. Even today with modern farming techniques you'll often see an ancient May bush smack dab in the middle of the field and everything ploughed around it. My mother still calls it the May bush. The only place I've ever seen one in America is at the Pony Express station in Gothenburg Nebraska, were I had my 4 year old eat some of the leaves with me. I wonder would it grow in Chicago if so I'd plant it for sure.

try beet root juice, also hawthorn as above as it increases the blood supply to vital areas.

are there any wild plants for us when we get some age on us to help with erectile dysfunction.

i have two of her books and two from Claude Davis. it couldn't get any better. all the info you could possibly need. i also bought a book called survival sanctuary by Lex Andrews and Mark Johnson it has a lot of really neat stuff in it for survival, including making your own garden out of wooden structures. there's much more to that book

Yes
Tara – 2021-09-17 19:31:28
Can the haw be eaten raw? (See what I did there lol)

kel – 2021-09-17 17:05:31
Omg this email is a book of great value - what effort! 🥰

marian+cronin – 2021-09-17 15:22:28
what about low blood pressure? can i still use hawthorn as an adaptogen?