

Featured Herbal Medicine

Crataegus spp. aka Hawthorne

Hawthorne is a member of the rose family with its characteristic spiny stems and moderately serrated lobed leaves and flowers ranging from white to pink, Hawthorne fits the bill.

However, unlike a rose, *Crataegus* can stand over 12 feet tall and is classified as a tree rather than a bush. It also bears fruit which are red in color and are approximately 1/4" in diameter. Each fruit contains either two or three seeds. Leaves, flowers, and berries are all medicinally active.

As a heart medicine, no other herb has such a positive, yet gentle influence on the entire cardiovascular system with plenty of research data to support the following claims. In Europe, Hawthorne is widely used to treat mild angina. The active properties of the plant improve vascular flow especially of the coronary arteries. i.e., the blood flow which wraps itself around the heart providing the heart with the necessary oxygen and nutrients it needs to function day in and day out without a moments rest. Other indications for the use of this plant are;



- Arrhythmia
- Tachycardia
- Valvular regurgitation
- Hyperlipidemia
- Hypertension
- Varicose veins
- Emotional states; grief, loss, mild depression

Where do these special powers come from? In the book, "Principles and Practices of Phytotherapy" by Mills and Bone, describes the special compounds to be oligomeric procyanidins (OPC's) and flavonoids which together serve the function of improving blood flow through dilation of the vascular (smooth muscle) coronary arteries.

Flavonoids are also cardio protective by improving the muscle contractility of the heart and paradoxically decreasing the work load on the heart. It also steadies the rate as well, decreasing the tendency of the heart to lose its rhythm. Flavonoids also improve venous wall integrity thereby decreasing the permeability which we often visibly see as a tendency to bruise easily. If bruising is your only vascular health issue, try Rose Hips or Vitamin C coupled with flavonoids to improve vascular integrity.

In addition, Hawthorne is a very safe plant with no known toxicity, contraindications, or special warnings reported. It does have a synergistic effect with the commonly prescribed medications for hypertension which may require modification of the original prescription and/or dosing schedule.

Hawthorne combines nicely with cardiac glycoside containing plants, which is often how it is prescribed in our office to fully and more efficiently address all of the patient's heart health and overall vascular issues. To determine which herbal blend is right for you, please call to make an appointment today.