

# herbs at a glance

## Hawthorn



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This fact sheet provides basic information about hawthorn—common names, what the science says, potential side effects and cautions, and resources for more information.

**Common Names**—hawthorn, English hawthorn, harthorne, haw, hawthorne

**Latin Names**—*Crataegus laevigata* (also known as *Crataegus oxyacantha*), *Crataegus monogyna*

Hawthorn is a spiny, flowering shrub or small tree of the rose family. The species of hawthorn discussed here are native to northern European regions and grow throughout the world.

Historically, hawthorn fruit has been used for heart disease since the first century. It has also been used for digestive and kidney problems. More recently, hawthorn leaf and flower have been used as folk or traditional remedies for heart failure, a weakness of the heart muscle that prevents the heart from pumping enough blood to the rest of the body, which can lead to fatigue and limit physical activities. Hawthorn is also used for other heart conditions, including symptoms of coronary artery disease (such as angina).

The hawthorn leaf and flower are used to make liquid extracts, usually with water and alcohol. Dry extracts can be put into capsules and tablets.

### What the Science Says

- There is scientific evidence that hawthorn leaf and flower may be safe and effective for milder forms of heart failure, but study results are conflicting.
- There is not enough scientific evidence to determine whether hawthorn works for other heart problems.
- NCCAM-supported research to date includes a study of the mechanism by which hawthorn may affect heart failure.

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## Side Effects and Cautions

- Hawthorn is considered safe for most adults when used for short periods of time. Side effects are rare and can include upset stomach, headache, and dizziness.
- Although drug interactions with hawthorn have not been thoroughly studied, there is evidence to suggest that hawthorn may interact with a number of different drugs, including certain heart medications.
- Tell all your health care providers about any complementary health practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care. For tips about talking with your health care providers about complementary and alternative medicine, see NCCAM's Time to Talk campaign at [nccam.nih.gov/timetotalk/](http://nccam.nih.gov/timetotalk/).

## Sources

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## For More Information

Visit the NCCAM Web site at [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov) and view *Using Dietary Supplements Wisely* ([nccam.nih.gov/health/supplements/wiseuse.htm](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/supplements/wiseuse.htm)).

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## NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

Web site: [www.ods.od.nih.gov](http://www.ods.od.nih.gov)

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