

Thistle

Cynara Cardunculus Spp.



Thistle belongs to the Family of Asteraceae and grows in rocky places, and can be found in the wild or cultivated form (in Portugal, it is part of the regional flora of Serra da Estrela).

The thistle flower is one of the three ingredients indispensable to the making of Serra da Estrela Cheese, along with milk and salt. It is also used in the manufacture of other cheeses such as Azeitão Cheese and Flor de Guía Cheese (born in the Spanish Canary Islands).

It attracts pollinating insects.

More information in: https://www.amu.bio/_thistle

Cultivation

It prefers well-drained, deep, fertile soils and rich in organic matter. Thistle grows well in most soil types and is quite tolerant of soil pH.

Irrigate in order to keep the soils moist in the seasons in which there is growth of the plant, but without it remaining drenched. The plant is, however, resistant to drought when it is already well developed.

História

Thistle derives from the Latin *carduus*, which means “to sign with the head”, alluding to the flower of ovoid form supported by the oscillating stem.

Utilisation

It is used as a coagulant in the production of various cheeses (Serra da Estrela Cheese, Queijo Azeitão and Flor de Guía Cheese).

The main application of thistle-mariano is in the treatment of liver changes, this due to one of its constituents, Silymarin. This substance acts directly on liver cells that are injured due to excess of toxic substances, such as alcohol, regenerating them and preventing new lesions. Thus, thistle can be used to avoid the treatment of cirrhosis, hepatitis or fat in the liver, for example.