



Milk Thistle Planting Guide

About Milk Thistle

Familiar to gardeners and laymen across the globe, Milk Thistle was once native to southern Europe, but is now widely distributed around the world. The good news is that it grows anywhere, the bad news is that some consider it nothing more than a weed. Known by many names, including Saint Mary's Thistle and Scotch Thistle, it produces a lovely purple bloom in the spring and summer and is commonly used in teas and medicinal remedies.

When to Plant

Milk Thistle plants are grown as annuals when started early indoors. Seed sown directly outdoors produce biennial plants in most climates, and will flower their second season.

Where to Plant

Milk Thistle performs best in full sun, with fertile soil and moderate water. Having said that, it can tolerate drought, any soil, and partial shade.

How to Plant

Direct sow Milk Thistle seeds 1/2" deep into prepared seed beds after all danger of frost. Plant in groups of 3-4 seeds, spaced 30-36" apart. Germination should be seen in 10-20 days. Thin to the strongest plant. Milk Thistle seeds can be started earlier indoors and transplanted.

Caring for Milk Thistle

When the plants are young, the leaves can be used in salads or other dishes once the spines are removed. Milk Thistle flowers attract bees and butterflies. To limit self-sowing, remove flowers after they bloom.