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Hawthorn Berries

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What's all the commotion and hoopla I'm hearing lately about these Hawthorn berries? Is the Hawthorn tree what we mountain folks call "Thorn Tree"?

Well, to answer your second question, first: Yes, Hawthorn Tree (*Crataegus oxyacantha*) is one in the same that's known in these parts as Thorn Tree.

For those of you who have never seen the Hawthorn Tree, it's not very big, usually only about 10-20 feet tall and its gray branches are endowed with long, hard and pointy "thorns". It is my understanding that the Indians used these thorns as needles to stitch their animal skin clothes and tee pees.

Once you see and identify the Hawthorn, you'll not likely forget it. It blooms in late spring with white blossoms, which turn into berries in the fall of the year. It is these red berries, which are so highly prized among the experienced herbalist.

This year, in these parts, the Hawthorn berries were not as plentiful as they usually are. My naturalist friend Wess (we call him Yule Gibbons) from up Markleysburg way, says this is because there was a late spring frost that damaged most of the blossoms. I did go over to my friend Jo Ann's farm last Tuesday (Oct. 16th), and managed to pick enough for a small batch of syrup.

However, ideally one should start picking around the beginning of October, as they fall to the ground by the second week. After they've fallen, it's just too hard to pick them off the ground, as then you have to search for them under the leaves. It's a very tedious job, of course. But, if one needs them medicinally, it would be worth doing.

So what's all the hoopla about Hawthorn berries? It has been used as a valuable medicinal herb since the Middle Ages. Today, Western herbalists consider it literally to be a "food for the heart", because it increases blood flow to the heart muscles and restores normal heartbeat. Much research has been done confirming this and more. The bioflavonoids in Hawthorn are strongly antioxidant, helping to prevent/reduce degeneration of the blood vessels. It is also used to treat angina and coronary artery disease. This herb is a valuable remedy for high blood pressure or low blood pressure. Its action is to work with the body's innate wisdom to regulate and restore the blood pressure to normal. And there's more!

Combined with Ginkgo, Hawthorn enhances poor memory. It works by improving the circulation of blood within the head, thereby increasing the amount of oxygen to the brain. Hawthorn berry has a long and reputable history for treating heart disease with no adverse side effects.

So you see, for anyone suffering from heart or circulatory problems Hawthorn berry is a must. If you want more in-depth information and research documentation check out: <http://www.hawthornsyrup.com>. The owner is a local man from Hopwood, near Uniontown. He healed himself of a bad heart condition ten years ago using Hawthorn berries and has been propounding its miracles ever since.

Once again Mother Nature has come to the rescue with her wonderful, healing plants!