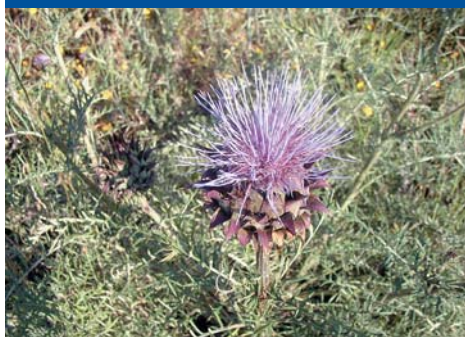


***Cynara cardunculus* L. var. *sylvestris* (Lamk.) Fiori**
Aster



Compiled by: Dr. Zeineb Ghrabi

■ Morphological description

The wild artichoke corresponds to the *sylvestris* variety of *Cynara cardunculus* L. It is a perennial, with a stem 20-60 cm. high, winged, spiny, furrowed, tomentose, simple or branched in the upper part.

The leaves are big and feathery, ashy green above and tomentose white below. The segments are linear and lanceolated, ending in a short spine. The lower leaves form a rosette, and are petiolar and 30-60 cm. long.

The caulinary leaves are sessile, decreasing in size. The terminal capitula are big, 4-5 cm. in diameter, and ovoid-globulous. The bracts of the involucre are fleshy at the base, tough, almost glabrous, triangular, long and tapering into spines; the middle ones are spreading. The receptacle is fleshy and thickly covered with silky hairs.

The flowers are blue with prominent stamens. The achenes are tetragonal, with winged angles, and the pappi have very long feathery silk hairs. Flowering takes place from June to July.

■ Geographical distribution

Local: The Kroumirie, the Medjerda valley, the dorsal ridge; rare in central and south Tunisia.

Regional: Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

Global: North Africa and the northern Mediterranean.

■ Ecology

The wild artichoke grows in grassy places and clayey depressions.

***Cynara cardunculus* L.** Sp. Pl. 827. 1753
Cynara cardunculus L. var. *sylvestris* (Lamk.) Fiori

Arabic: Khorchef

French: Artichaut sauvage

English: Wild artichoke

■ Status, conservation, culture

In Tunisia, Pottier Alapetite only mentions the variety *sylvestris* (Lamk.) Fiori, which is basically used as a food. Essentially, the ribs of the leaves and the young floral capitula are eaten. The wild artichoke (*khorchef*) is eaten after being cooked in a *shekshouka*, *couscous* or as a stew or in soups. This variety is grown in certain parts of the country. The ribs of the leaves are picked and sold in the vegetable markets. However, the artichokes used in medicine are gathered from wild plants and sold fresh along the roadsides, especially in the Kairouan region.

■ Part used

Stems, leaves and roots.

■ Constituents

The whole plant, though especially the leaves and roots, contains cynarin, flavonoids – cynarosid, scolymosid, an oxydase (orthodiphenolase) and inulin.

■ Pharmacological action

Protects the liver; choleric, cholagogic, diuretic, febrifuge, hypocholesterolemiant: these properties are confirmed in *Cynara scolymus*, the result of selecting and improving *Cynara cardunculus*.

■ Traditional medicine

Hepatitis: a decoction of the stems of *Cynara cardunculus* L.; three glasses a day taken by mouth before meals until a cure results

Sugar diabetes: a decoction of equal amounts of the leaves of *Citrus aurantium* L. and the roots of *Cynara cardunculus* L.; three glasses a day taken by mouth before meals

The stems and ribs of the leaves are used as a vegetable.

■ Use in herbal medicine

Extracts of *Cynara cardunculus* L. are currently used in the galenical way as an addition to food to protect the liver.

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