



# CYNARA CARDUNCULUS

Fam. Asteraceae

## DESCRIPTION

Herbaceous plant, perennial in nature, annual in cultivation, very similar to the artichoke except for its greater height that can exceed one meter.

## LEAVES

Generally lanceolate; the blade can be slightly jagged or deeply incised in 10 or more lobes; the leaf margin is almost always thorny.

## HABITAT

It is a very ancient plant (it was cultivated at the time of the Egyptians) that spread from North Africa throughout the Mediterranean.

## DISTRIBUTION

It is widespread throughout the Mediterranean basin; in Italy, it can be found in all regions thanks to its very robust character that adapts well to any environment and weather condition.

## FLOWERS

Flowering generally occurs between April and June. The flowers are hermaphrodite, tubular, gathered in a flower head inflorescence; their colour spans over various shades of violet-blue, however white mutants can also be found.

## ROOTS

Very deep taproots allow the plant to survive in conditions of water shortage.

## FRUITS

Achenes with a pappus to promote dissemination.

## STEM

Erect, branched stem with thorns; in the terminal part, the leaves may be absent or reduced in number.

## INTERESTING FACTS

Among the many varieties of cardoon, the Chieri Thistle, very common in Piedmont, is not very thorny. The thistle is the national emblem of Scotland. One legend has it a sleeping party of Scots warriors were saved from ambush by an invading Norse army when one of the enemies trod on the spiky plant. His anguished cry roused the slumbering warriors who duly vanquished the invader and adopted the thistle as their national symbol.

