Herb Of The Month

June 1, 2001 By Michael Onstott

Hawthorn

PARTS TO USE: Flowers, leaves, berries

FORMS: Capsules, tablets, liquid extract, syrup, tea

DAILY DOSE: 120-240 mg (capsules), 1 tsp. liquid extract or syrup, or 1 tsp. herb (as tea) -- each taken three times per day

COST: $7-$20 monthly

CAUTIONS: Hawthorn may boost the effects of some heart meds (such as digoxin) and cause high blood pressure when taken with beta-blockers (drugs for angina, hypertension, arrhythmia and migraine). Consult your doctor.

Hawthorn is a slow-working, effective and nontoxic heart tonic. It is used to lower blood pressure, treat mild, chronic congestive heart failure and irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia) and aid recovery after a heart attack. Over time, hawthorn strengthens the heart muscle and enhances blood circulation and oxygen use. This thorny member of the rose family has been pressed into service for centuries to treat urinary tract and stomach ailments. Today, the antioxidant herb is prized for its natural constituents -- flavonoids and proanthocyanidins -- which dilate and relax blood vessels, lowering blood pressure and improving the heart's pumping power. Hawthorn works best over a period of weeks or months and is generally not an herb to self-prescribe, especially if you're on heart meds. Ask your "herb-savvy" doc for his or her berry best advice.

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