

# It's a Gardener's World!

The Scottish Thistle - Beautifully Bold!

WEEDS! They're thriving in this wonderful summer weather – wet & warm! Round the field behind The Acres, where I take Tip for his walks, there are 'jungles' of nettles, wild grass, brambles &, standing proud & regal, are the thistles. Thistles have delicately beautiful flower heads, viciously sharp thorns, a stubborn and tenacious grip on the land & the defiant ability to flourish in spite of efforts to remove it.

Did you know ... **The Scottish Thistle is the oldest recorded 'National Flower'** and is probably one of the most well-known, and easily recognized symbols of Scotland. A humble weed might seem an odd symbolic choice, but really what could be better than a native-born plant which is as bold as it is beautiful? Common throughout the highlands, islands and lowlands of Scotland, the prickly purple thistle has been Scotland's national emblem for centuries.



In truth, no one knows for certain how the purple-flowered thistle rose to such lofty significance. But one legend has it that 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. After this Viking episode, the thistle became known as the "Guardian Thistle" and, under James III, it became the badge of the Stuarts. Today it is the insignia of the Scottish guard and has been used on coins, banknotes, stamps and broadswords. It even decorates the tomb of Mary, Queen of Scots. Given the legend surrounding the Scottish thistle, the plant clearly connotes bravery, courage, and loyalty in the face of treachery. The tough, painful spikes of the plant itself suggest endurance and fortitude. The Thistle's vibrant pink or purple colour represents royalty and nobility, as well as the nobility of character.

Today the Thistle is seen on everything from sporrans and jewellery to soap and tea-towels, and it's a Scottish symbol recognized all over the world.

That prickly weed has come a long way!

But while you might think it's just a weed, you've got to learn to 'read' your weeds!

There's a Spanish Proverb that says: "He that has a good Harvest must be content with a few thistles."

Thistles are designed to repel grazing animals. It's nature's way of saying enough. Enough grazing, it's time now to heal. So, it sends up its thistles with its spiny leaves, no longer inviting the animals to feed on the lush green grass. It repels these grazers from tramping and compacting the soil and with its long taproots, thistles mine the soil to bring up and replace the now needed nutrients. The long taproots penetrate deep to break up and loosen the hard soil. The thistle is telling us to stay away until the soil is rebuilt, until the earth is healed. It sets the stage for the disturbance to end, health to return and the next level of succession to begin.

What a fantastic message for today – despite the 'tramping' we've had over the past months, when life has been hard & painful, the thistle reminds us the earth will heal. As God is our 'Guardian, He will renew us with the nourishment essential for the maintenance of life and for growth. We've got lots to pray & give thanks for this week!