

## *Silybum marianum*

### **Common name:**

Variegated, Spotted, Milk, Cabbage - Thistle,

### **Palatability to Livestock:**

High at all stages.

### **Toxicity to Goats:**

Low risk.

### **Toxicity to Other Species:**

Potentially toxic to sheep and cattle.

### **Poisonous Principle:**

Nitrates.

### **Effects:**

*Signs and symptoms;*

- . Respiratory distress.
- . Darkening of the gums.

*Health and Production Problems;*

- . Veg fault of fleece.
- . Either death, or recovery.
- . Chokes out more desirable plants.

*Treatment;*

- . Keep hungry animals out of paddocks that have this weed, especially if thistles have been sprayed with "hormone" herbicide.

### **Integrated Control Strategy:**

- . Slash, plough and cultivate.
- . Use herbicide, Group B or I.
- . Wilted plants may cause nitrate poisoning, do not graze.
- . Biological control agents are being tested.
- . Noxious in SA, Tasmania and Victoria.

### **Comments:**

- . Stout bushy annual or biennial weed, growing from a rosette, growing to about 50 cm diameter and 2.5 m high.
- . Strong shiny bracts surround the base of the flower and stem.

. Purple thistle-like flowers are single, at the end of branches, large and showy, with clusters of bright purple florets surrounded by long stiff spiny bracts.

. Spread by seed, growing on rich alluvial soils.  
. Spiny variegated leaves without stems, distinctive grey-green, shiny and thistle-like with spiny irregular margins, each tooth ending in a fine yellow spine, and broad milky white areas along veins.

. A native of Europe, now found in all states.

. Can produce sudden death in sheep and cattle, where heavy growth occurs after good rains.

. Germinates in cooler months, and will produce a single flower stem in first year, given enough moisture, then will develop and produce multiple flower stems.



Picture: *Silybum marianum* wikipedia

### **Further Reading:**

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