

Burdock

Arctium lappa (Asteraceae)

Fast Facts: Number of Growers: less than 50
Acres in Washington: less than 50
Per Acre Value: \$1800- \$2500
\$7-\$12.50 per lb. for dried root
Percent of U.S. Production: less than 1%

Description

Of crop:

Burdock is a member of the thistle family and is chiefly a biennial plant of the genus *Arctium* having pink or purplish flower heads surrounded by prickly bracts and forming a bur. The flowers bloom between June and October. It is related to the artichoke and in many areas of the U.S. it is considered a weed. The plant grows to a height of about three to four feet and has dark green leaves that can grow up to 18" long and leaf stocks that are usually hollow. Burdock is cultivated for its slender roots. The taproot of the young burdock plants can be harvested and eaten as a root vegetable. It can be peeled and eaten raw or cooked and is popular in Asian cuisine. The roots are crisp and have a sweet, mild and pungent flavor. Immature flower stalks can also be harvested in the late spring before flowers appear and the taste is similar to an artichoke. The roots of burdock resemble nightshade so care should be taken when harvesting it in the wild.

The dried roots from the plant are most often used for medicinal purposes but the leaves and seeds are also used. The leaves are collected during the first year of growth and the roots are dug up in the fall of the first year after planting, or during the following spring before the flowers bloom. The roots are harvested by hand when they are 12 inches or more in length and about 1 inch thick. The leaves are harvested in July and have a bitter taste. The seeds are harvested when they are ripe and are shaken out of the head and dried. Burdock seed is produced on limited acreage in the Columbia Basin. For more information on burdock seed go to: <http://www.snakeriver.org/wscpr/WSCPRBook.cfm>

In Washington, burdock is usually grown for its root as a medicinal herb. The roots can be harvested by hand but is labor intensive however mechanical diggers do not always go deep enough for good results. The value of this crop is often predicated on the processing done to its prior to shipping. Burdock is a traditional medicinal herb that is used for various conditions such as promoting a healthy scalp and maintaining hair growth. It has been used for centuries as a blood purifier, a diuretic and for skin problems such as acne, eczema and psoriasis.

Burdock's main claim to fame is when George de Mestral looked at the seeds of the burdock plant that had attached themselves to his clothes. Under a microscope he saw the hook-and-loop system that the seeds employed to attach themselves. Using this same concept he invented Velcro.

Key pests:

Burdock has few, if any, insect, disease or weed issues. Grasshoppers can be a problem in the fields. In many cases, small organic growers are wildcrafting this and other herbs. This means they are utilizing plants that are growing wild for their purposes. When grown in the greenhouse, powdery mildew may also be a problem.

Key pesticides:

Growing medicinal herbs generally means the use of organic methods of production. Few pesticides are cleared for use on medicinal herbs.

Critical pest**Control issues:**

If growers are starting plants from seed, their biggest problem is finding a reliable source of seed true to the particular species. Weeds are controlled with hand hoeing, mulches and landscape fabrics. Growers should pick disease and pest resistant cultivars when available. Disease infected plants should be removed and destroyed. Growers should use 4 to 5 year crop rotations. Beneficial insects should be encouraged and over watering should be avoided.

Expert contact: Wild Canyon Organics

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Location

Of Production: Asotin, Grant and Okanogan counties



burdock root

www.normanallan.com





Burdock

Burdock Production in Washington State

