

*Argemone mexicana*

[Synonyms : *Argemone leiocarpa*, *Argemone mexicana* var. *lutea*, *Argemone mexicana* var. *ochroleuca*, *Argemone mexicana* var. *parviflora*, *Argemone mexicana* var. *typica*, *Argemone mucronata*, *Argemone sexvalis*, *Argemone spinosa*, *Argemone versicolor*, *Argemone vulgaris*, *Echtrus mexicanus*, *Echtrus trivialis*]

**MEXICAN POPPY** is an invasive perennial (grown as an annual). Native to tropical America (particularly Mexico) it has fragrant orange or pale yellow (rarely white) flowers that have many stamens.

It is also known as *Ananse mmenyan* (Twi), *Argemone* (French), Birds in the bush, *Brahmadandi* (Telugu), *Bramadandu* (Tamil), Bull thistle, *Chadron benit* (Creole), *Chelang keringan* (Javanese), *Chicalote*, *Darudi* (Gujarati), Devil's fig, Flowering thistle, Golden thistle of Peru, *Gul taggvallmo* (Swedish), Headache garden, Headache poppy, Infernal fig, Jamaica thistle, Mexican prickly poppy, Mexican thorn poppy, *Ponnum-mattam* (Malayalam), Poppy, Prickly pepper, Prickly poppy, Pricky poppy, *Siakanta* (Punjabi), *Shialkanta* (Bengali, Hindi), *Srigala-kantaka* (Sanskrit), *Stachelmohn* (German), *Taggvallmo* (Swedish), Thistle oil plant, Thistle poppy, Thistle root, Thorn apple, Wild hollyhock, Yellow prickly poppy, and Yellow thistle.

Warning – Mexican poppy seeds contain poisonous substances that can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, fainting and coma. They are poisonous for some animals. The seeds have contaminated grain (thereby flour) and animal feed.

*Mexicana* means 'of or from Mexico'.

Today the common name Golden thistle of Peru is recognized as a misnomer.

In 1592 John Gerard (1545-1612) the English barber-surgeon and herbalist, is believed to have cultivated seed received from the West Indies. In London it became established as a popular ornamental plant of the period. It spread in Europe and in due time from there it is believed to have reached eastern Asia.

The Negro slaves on the plantations in the Caribbean and southern North America smoked the seeds during their rituals.

The seed oil has been used for lighting and has also provided an ingredient in the manufacture of soap. In Mexico it has been used to make furniture polish (it is understood to have repellent qualities for white ants).

In the past some authorities claim that the root was used as cotton spools.

Medicinally, the oil has been used locally in the past as a purgative, and in treatments for headaches and some skin disorders, and the roots have been used to treat worms.