

*Crataegus mollis*

[Synonyms : *Crataegus albicans*, *Crataegus arkansana*, *Crataegus brachyphylla*, *Crataegus cibaria*, *Crataegus coccinea* var. *mollis*, *Crataegus dumetosa*, *Crataegus gravida*, *Crataegus induta*, *Crataegus invisus*, *Crataegus lacera*, *Crataegus limaria*, *Crataegus mollis* var. *dumetosa*, *Crataegus mollis* var. *gigantea*, *Crataegus mollis* var. *incisifolia*, *Crataegus mollis* var. *mollis*, *Crataegus mollis* var. *sera*, *Crataegus noelensis*, *Crataegus pedicellata* var. *albicans*, *Crataegus placens*, *Crataegus tiliaefolia*]

**DOWNY THORN** is a thorny deciduous tree. Native to eastern and central North America it has small red-marked, white flowers.

It is also known as Arnold hawthorn, Blueberry hawthorne, Downy haw, Downy hawthorn, Downy hawthorne, *Hloh měkký* (Czech), Red-fruited haw, Red haw, Summer haw, and Turkey apple.

The flowers have an initially fairly pleasant smell which becomes ever more fetid as they mature in order to attract the pollinating by tiny gnat-like flies.

Warning – the seeds are poisonous.

*Mollis* is Latin (soft) meaning ‘softly hairy or velvety tenderness’.

The North American Omaha Indians made a tea from the twigs. Their children ate the small hairy red berries fresh – and the adults ate the fruit as a famine food.

Locally the fruit are eaten raw or used to make preserves.

Cattle browse on the foliage and fruit, especially when the latter have softened and fallen. The berries are also enjoyed by a wide range of wildlife from squirrels to finches, buntings, sparrows and warblers. Mice run off with the seeds which they store and eat.

Downy thorn has been cultivated as hedging, and as an ornamental plant and a street tree.

The wood has been used for making mallets, tool handles and other small items.

Medicinally, recent research has confirmed traditional practice of local herbalists who recommended long term use of a tea made from the fruit and flowers as a heart tonic.