



**One in a series.....**

## Cirsium

is a genus of perennial and biennial flowering plants in the Asteraceae, one of several genera known commonly as thistles. They are more precisely known as plume thistles. These differ from other thistle genera (*Carduus*, *Silybum* and *Onopordum*) in having feathered hairs to their achenes. [Wikipedia](#)

Near Airipine, west of Snowflake I happened upon some thistles that quite attracted me. Heavily armed with prickles, they intrigued me as a plant that could easily compliment any cacti. Growing somewhat lower to the ground than all of the common thistles\* I've seen, this is a major plus. Wanting to identify this particular one, I find that they're at least 14 species of *Cirsium* in Northern Arizona. So solving this mystery is going to be evolving ...so stay tuned. I would say most possibly, *C. ocoцерum* v. *martinii*.



Collecting a few seeds from the ones pictured above, I planted them in a five gallon container and just recently noticed a small seedling growing (yes, inspite of a few single digit days-pictured below). So the future is to trial the plant (hopefully a few more will show?) to see just how a summer of them will work. They have as you can see a nice round flower head of purple that should attract bee's and hummingbirds. Most promising is that I'm expecting they will bloom regularly during the growing season from probably late May through to September. Contrast this with most cacti that bloom only once in early spring and you understand my interest. Not wanting any of the typical thistle that are much too upright, this one has super armed lower leaves that are twisted, but as with any trial, we shall see.

Thistles are non-woody plants that are outfitted with prickles, one of the three different kinds of plant armor recognized by botanists. Thorns are modified branches and then spines are just modified leaves (cactus).

\* Seed Plants of Northern Arizona W. B. McDougall 1973

P.S. I like to think that it's because I have a wee bit of Scottish heritage that I'm attracted to them.

