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## **The Effect of Hydropriming on Germination Performance and Seedlings Growth in Milk Thistle (*Silybum marianum*) Seeds**

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(Received: 06.07.2015 ; Accepted: 26.01.2016)

### **Abstract**

Efficient seed germination and rapid and uniform seedling emergence are important in commercial agriculture. Therefore, the use of strategies to improve germination and seedling establishment is necessary for increasing productivity. Hydropriming has been suggested as a simple pre-germination strategy to improve seed performance. In this study, the effects of different durations of hydropriming (10, 24, 48 and 72 hours) at different temperatures (10 and 25 °C) compared to unprimed seeds on the vigor and germination performance of five milk thistle accessions (Ahvaz, Sari, Esfahan, Dezfol and Gachsaran) were evaluated. An experiment was conducted as a factorial experiment based on a completely randomized design with three replications. Germination performance was evaluated by final germination percentage, mean daily germination, mean germination time, coefficient of velocity of germination, Timson's index, time to reach 50% the final germination percentage, germination value, coefficient of uniformity of germination, length and dry weight of seedlings and vigor index. The results show that germination capacity, germination rate and seedling vigor indexes increase significantly in hydroprimed seeds at temperature of 10°C, whereas decrease in hydroprimed seeds at temperature of 25°C. Our results also show that the efficacy of hydropriming on seedling emergence and vigor traits depends on the priming duration and temperature. Hydropriming at 10°C indicated the most effective on germination indicators and seedling vigor when compared to unprimed seeds. In addition, the comparison of germination and growth indicators in different durations of hydropriming in five milk thistle accessions indicated that the best duration of hydropriming for Ahvaz and Gajsaran is 72h, for Sari and Dezfol is 48 and 72h and for Esfahan is 10 and 24h. Therefor, the effect of hydropriming on germination performance and seedling vigor depends on plant association and hydropriming time and therefore, the selection of the best condition for hydropriming will improve the seed germinability and vigor.

**Keywords:** *Seed vigor, Priming, Coefficient of uniformity of germination, Coefficient of velocity of germination*