

Mullein *Verbascum thapsus*

A member of the *Scrophularia* family

Harvesting: Mullein is a biennial; it starts out in the spring as a rosette of small furry leaves. Around mid June into July the flower stalks from second year plants start to shoot up and have flowers from mid July through September. You can harvest the small leaves from the rosette in the spring for tincture or salve. The flowers can be harvested to make oil for the ears. The roots can be collected in the fall for tincture.



Habitat: Just about everywhere you go you can find those big tall Mullein spikes growing out of fields. Mullein likes a lot of sun and disturbed soils. Many people even choose to have these lovely plants in their gardens.

Botanical Description: Common. Stout and erect 1-2m usually densely gray tomentose throughout; leaves entirely shallowly crenate, the lower oblong or oblanceolate, to 3 dm. petioled, the upper progressively reduced, sessile, decurrent along stem to the next. If below spike-like inflorescence very dense. Flowers June-Sept. Usually solitary. Corolla Yellow. Filaments short and white with short anthers, lower to filaments much longer, glabrous with linear anthers. Stigma capitate. Native to Europe now abundant throughout most of N. America.

Qualities: Salty, Minerally (Water follows salts and minerals)

Actions: Nervine Tonic, Sedative, Antispasmodic, Diaphoretic, Hypotensive, Galactagogue, Hepatic

Constituents: Iridoids, Essential Oil, Mucilage

Historical Uses: Mullein is one of those plants that have been used for a long time by many traditions. Materia Medicas on Mullein date back to the earliest writings in Eastern and Western Medicine. Maude Grieve lists that it has been used for allaying coughs and soothing sore mucous membranes, soothing hemorrhoids, and the oil for earaches or dry skin around the ears. It was also used a long time ago in Europe for the cough of cattle and other livestock.

Modern Western Herbal Medicine: The most important characteristic of Mullein is its ability to build up fluids and soothe. It is considered a Bear Medicine in Native American cultures, the building and strengthening medicines. It is good for those that are dry and wasting after a disease. It is good for coughs that are dry, harsh, racking, shakes the

frame, and breaks a rib. It soothes and coats the mucous membranes of the lungs and eases expectoration. It is also known to soothe earaches and any dry skin in or around the ears. It is a member of the Scrophularia family, which is long associated with scrofula (swollen glands). So this can be used for swollen glands but usually when the person is dry and thin and the lymphatic system is dry. It is mildly astringent and can check diarrhea and irritation from colitis, and enteritis, but it basically is building up the mucous membranes of the intestines so that irritation is checked and fluids are not lost. It helps with hemorrhoids. This can also be used in many bone and muscular complaints but has an affinity to the ribs and spines. This is the number one remedy for a broken rib. Applying the leaves to the broken ribs in a poultice for a couple of days has healed a broken rib dramatically in a number of cases. This remedy has been employed when broken bones just don't want to set. Getting the synovial fluid healthy can help set the bones. It helps the spine when there is a lack of synovial fluid and chiropractic adjustments that don't stick.



Mullein is a wonderful herb to add to any treatment of colds and flues. It is also good to have a salve for anyone that has allergies so that they can rub it on their chest. Or you can add the oil to a lotion. I have many times helped people with sore joints from over use with mullein. It seems to build up the bursa around joints. Pleurisy Root is better for healing the bursa in most cases but if you have mullein, use that. This is just one of those herbs that people should always have around the house in dried, salve and tincture form as it can help with many different things. My favorite way to help my family when we have colds is to make a decoction from the leaves (boil for 15 minutes) in a big pot then place our head over the steam with a towel over our heads. Sometimes I add Eucalyptus oil to the water or other herbs like catnip. Sit for 10 minutes or more breathing in the steam. Then I pour the water into a hot bath and sit in the bath, letting the skin soak up the Mullein. Then straight to a warm bed to get the sleep that healing needs. I have found that my spine even feels better when I take a mullein bath.

Contraindications: None known

Dosages: 2 to 3 drops 3x daily. Topical, Flower Essence, Salve.

References: *Materia Medica*, Matthew Wood, *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern U.S. and Adjacent Canada 2nd ed.* Gleason and Cronquist, *A Modern Herbal*, Maude Grieve, *Homeopathic Materia Medica*, Boericke, Erica Fargione's Case Studies, *FES Flower Essence Reperetory*, Katz, *Medical Herbalism*, Hoffman