

Common Name: **Mullein**

Genus: *Verbascum*

Species: *thapsus*

Family: Scrophulariaceae

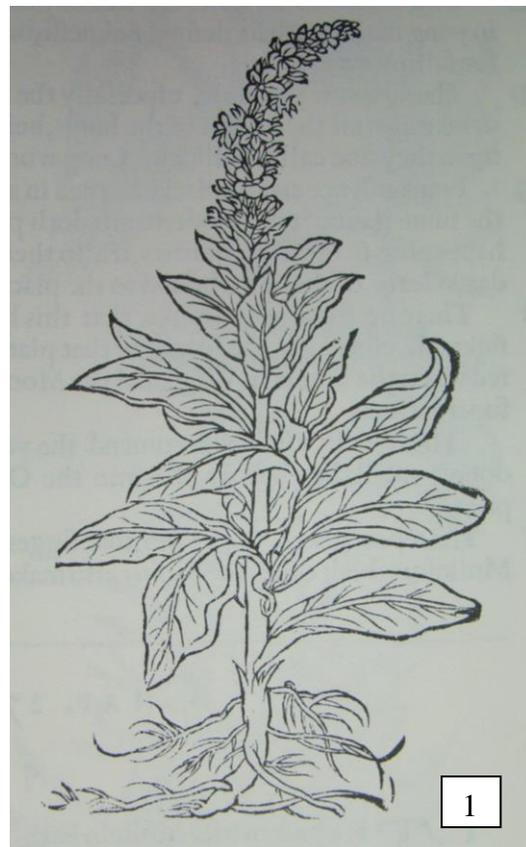
AKA: Great Mullein, Aaron's rod, White Mullein, Torches, Mullein Dock, Our Lady's Flannel, Velvet Dock, Blanket Herb, Velvet Plant, Woollen, Rag Paper, Candlewick Plant, Wild Ice Leaf, Clown's Lungwort, Bullock's Lungwort, Jupiter's Staff, Jacob's Staff, Peter's Staff, Shepherd's Staff, Shepherd's Clubs, Beggar's Stalk, Golden Rod, Adam's Flannel, Beggar's Blanket, Clot, Cuddy's Lungs, Duffle, Feltwort, Fluffweed, Hare's Beard, Old Man's Flannel, Hag's Taper



Historical Uses:

Medical: "...Whence as much as an knucklebone is profitably given with wine in a drink to ye fluxing. But the decoction of it is good for ruptures & convulsions and Squatts, & old coughs, and being colluted assuageth ye toothaches, but ye golden-coloured in ye flowers, dyes the hair, & wheresoever it be put, draws to it woodworms. But ye leaves sodden in water are laid on for Oedemata, & inflammations of ye eyes, and with honey or wine for eating ulcers. But with Acetum, it heals wounds, & helps ye Scorpion-smitten..." (1)

"The leaves of Mullein being boiled in water, and laid upon hard swellings and inflammations of the eies, cureth and ceaseth the paine. The root boiled in red wine and drunke, stoppeth the laske and bloody flix. The same boiled in water and drunke, is good for them that are broken and hurt inwardly, and prevaileth much against the old cough. A little fine treacle spread upon a leafe of Mullein, and laied to the piles or Hemorrhoides, cureth the same: and ointment also made with the leaves thereof and old hogs grease worketh the same effect. The leaves worne under the feet day and night, in manner of a shooe sole or sock, bringeth down in yong maidens





A young plant before the development of the distinctive flower stalk

their desired sicknesses, being kept under their feet with some socks or other thing for falling away...” (2)

“Mullein [wullenen] is warm and dry and somewhat cold. Let whoever has a weak and sad heart, cook mullein with meat, fish, or pastry, but without other herbs, and eat this often; the person’s heart will be strengthened and made happy. Let whoever has a hoarse voice or a sore throat which causes pain in the chest cook mullein and an equal amount of fennel in good wine, strain it through a piece of cloth, and then drink this often. The person’s voice will return and the chest will be healed.” (3)

“A small quantity of the root given in wine, is commended by *Dioscorides* against lasks and fluxes of the belly. The decoction hereof drank, is profitable for those that are bursten, and for cramps and convulsions, and those that are troubled with an old cough. The decoction thereof gargled, easeth the pains of the tooth-ache. And the oil made by the often infusion of the flowers is of very good effect for the piles. The decoction of the root in red wine or in water, (if there be an ague,) wherein red hot steel hath been often quenched, doth stay the bloody flux. The same also openeth obstructions of the bladder and veins when one cannot make water. A decoction of the leaves hereof, and of sage, marjoram, and chamomile flowers, and the places bathed therewith, that have sinews stiff with cold or cramps, doth bring them much ease and comfort. Three ounces of the distilled water of the flowers, drank morning and evening for some days together, is said to be a most excellent remedy for the gout...” (4)

Household: “Its fluff provided wicks for lamps and candles; dipped in fats,



The flower stalk in flower

formed a torch.” “ The seeds, which contain saponins, act as a fish poison. In ancient Rome a decoction of the flowers was used to cleanse or dye hair.” (5)

Folklore/Astrology: “There be some who thinke that this herbe being but carried about one, doth helpe the falling sicknesse, especially the leaves of that plant which hath not as yet borne flours, and that is gathered when the *Sun* is in *Virgo*, and the *Moone* in *Aries*; which thing notwithstanding is vaine and superstitious...” (6)

“It is under the dominion of *Saturn*...” (7)

“...Concerning this plant, it is said that *Mercury* gave it to *Lord Ulysses* when he met *Circe*, and because of it he did not fear any of her evil deeds.” (8)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Leaves and flowers

Medicinal: “The Mullein has very markedly demulcent, emollient and astringent properties, which render it useful in pectoral complaints and bleeding of the lungs and bowels. The whole plant seems to possess slightly sedative and narcotic properties...” (9)

“Internally for coughs, whooping cough, bronchitis, laryngitis, tonsillitis, tracheitis, asthma, influenza, respiratory mucus, tuberculosis, urinary tract infections, nervous tension, and insomnia. Externally for earache (flowers in olive oil), sores, wounds, boils, rheumatic pain, hemorrhoids, and chilblains.” (10)

Economic: “Leaves are smoked alone, or with *Eriodictyon californicum* and *Tussilago farfara* as a substitute for tobacco.” (11)



Close-up of the Mullein flower. Note the developing seed pods on the stalk

Area of Origin: West Europe

Physical description: Robust biennial with obovate-oblong, gray-green, wooly leaves, to 20” long, forming a basal rosette in the first year.

Plant type: Biennial

Form: Upright

Height: 6’

Flower color: Yellow

Flowering period: May-August

Soil type/requirements: Well-drained to poor dry soil

Hardiness zone: USDA 5-9

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: By seed sown in late spring or early summer; by root cuttings in late winter; self-sows freely in suitable conditions.

Sources

1. Dioscorides, p. 500
2. Gerard, p. 773-774
3. Von Bingen, p. 115
4. Culpepper, p. 96
5. Anderson, p. 332
6. Gerard, p. 773-774
7. Culpepper, p. 96
8. Van Arsdall, p. 127, p. 181
9. Grieve, p. 562-565
10. Bown, p. 401
11. Ibid

Illustrations/Images:

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| 1. Gerard's Herbal | 1633 ed. |
| 2. PSUMG | 2012 |
| 3. PSUMG | 2012 |
| 4. PSUMG | 2014 |