

# Mullein

Latin Name: *Verbascum thapsus*

*Also known as:* Mullein Dock, Lungwort, Cow's Lungwort, Bullock's Lungwort, Flannel Flower, Flannel Leaf, Velvet Leaf, Velvet Dock, Feltwort, Bunny Ears, Begger's Blanket, Shepherd's Club, Aaron's Rod, Jacob's Staff, Candlewick, Torch Weed

## Scientific Classification

There are over 360 species of *Verbascum*. Other species commonly used in herbal traditions include *V. phlomoides* (orange mullein), *V. nigrum* (black mullein) and *V. densiflorum* (large-flowered mullein), which are also found in North America.

*Family:* Scrophulariaceae – figwort family  
*Genus:* *Verbascum* – mullein  
*Species:* *V. thapsus* – common mullein

Influence on the Body	(PRINCIPLE ACTIONS are listed in CAPITAL LETTERS)
<i>Blood and Circulatory System</i>	dropsy (edema due to heart insufficiency) • HEMORRHAGE
<i>Body System</i>	MUCOUS MEMBRANES • DEMULGENT (softens and soothes inflammation of mucous membranes) • CATARRH (mucous membrane inflammation and congestion) • PAIN RELIEVER • ANODYNE (relieves pain and reduces nerve excitability) • SWOLLEN JOINTS (use as a fomentation) • cramps • spasms • INSOMNIA
<i>Cancer</i>	tumors • malignant throat cancer
<i>Digestive Tract</i>	colic • ulcers • constipation • DIARRHEA • BLEEDING BOWELS • DYSENTERY (bowel inflammation) • hemorrhoidal discomfort (use herb as a fomentation) • anthelmintic (kills parasites and worms)
<i>Ears</i>	EARACHES • EAR INFECTIONS
<i>Eyes</i>	sore eyes
<i>First Aid</i>	sprains • vulnerary (promotes healing of wounds by protecting against infection and stimulating cellular growth)
<i>Infections and Immune System</i>	hayfever • colds • flu • antiseptic • antibacterial • LYMPHATIC CONGESTION • SWOLLEN GLANDS • herpes simplex • mumps • childhood diseases

<i>Inflammation</i>	rheumatism • bursitis • immuno-suppressant
<i>Lungs and Respiratory System</i>	RESPIRATORY • RESPIRATORY ALLERGIES • asthma • breathing problems • BRONCHITIS • COUGHS • EXPECTORANT (loosens and removes phlegm in the respiratory tract) • ANTI-TUSSIVE (inhibits the cough reflex) • CROUP • EMPHYSEMA (enlarged air spaces in the lungs, making breathing difficult) • LUNG PROBLEMS • BLEEDING LUNGS (hemorrhage) • PLEURISY (painful inflammation of chest cavity lining) • pneumonia • PULMONARY DISEASES • CONSUMPTION (TUBERCULOSIS) • THICKENING OF LUNG TISSUE
<i>Mouth, Nose &amp; Throat</i>	toothache • nasal congestion • nosebleed • SINUS PROBLEMS • SINUSITIS • sore throat • hoarseness • gargle • tonsillitis
<i>Nervous System</i>	NERVOUSNESS • antispasmodic
<i>Reproductive System</i>	<i>Male:</i> • swollen testicles <i>Female:</i> • mastitis (breast inflammation, use as a fomentation)
<i>Skin, Tissues &amp; Hair</i>	boils • bruises • skin disorders • emollient (softens and soothes skin and mucous membranes) • SORES • poison ivy • rashes • infant rashes • diaper rash • warts
<i>Urinary Tract</i>	nephritis (kidney inflammation) • dysuria (impaired ability to pass urine, painful voiding) • astringent (tightens and constricts tissues, reducing swelling) • diuretic (increases urine flow)

**Key Properties:**

- RESPIRATORY TRACT – soothes mucous membranes, loosens phlegm, heals pulmonary organs
- ANODYNE – relieves pain, reduces swelling of glands and joints, soothes inflammation
- ARRESTS BLEEDING – heals blood vessels, particularly noted in lungs and bowels

**Primarily affecting:** RESPIRATORY TRACT • GLANDS • LYMPH

<b>History</b>	The plant's scientific name 'Verbascum' is a corruption of the Latin words 'barbascum', 'barba' meaning beard. The name, 'mullein', comes from the Latin word 'mollis,' for soft. The flowers impart a yellow color to boiling water which was
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used by Roman women to dye their hair golden.

Asian Indians used the stalk for cramps, fevers, and migraine headaches. The power of driving away evil spirits was ascribed to mullein both in Europe and Asia . It has the reputation among the natives in India, as a sure safeguard against evil spirits and magic. In their medicine, it was primarily used to treat diarrhea, respiratory diseases, and hemorrhoids.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the plant had many uses. The dried leaves are readily flammable, and the down on the leaves and stem make excellent tinder. Before the introduction of cotton, the dried downy hairs were used as lamp wicks. When dried and dipped in oil, whole stalks were burned like torches.

Both men and livestock were given mullein to chew for respiratory congestion and breathing difficulties. Herbalists made mullein poultices of the fresh, bruised leaves for rashes, slow-healing wounds, ulcers and tumors. A mullein flower tea wash was made for burns, sores and ringworm. Taken internally, mullein is a mild diuretic and was used to treat kidney infections and digestive upsets. Mullein tea, brewed from either the leaves or the flowers, was used as a remedy for coughs and colds.

Prominent English herbalist John Gerard (1545-1612) wrote of mullein, "The leaves are worn under the feet in a manner of a shoe sole or sock and assist to bring down in young maidens their desired sickness being so kept under their feet that they do not fall away." He considered mullein to be an admirable bactericide, stating, "Figs do not putrifie at all that are wrapped in the leaves of mullein."

Nicholas Culpeper, English botanist, herbalist, physician and astrologer (1616-1654) stated, "The powder of the dried flowers is an especial remedy for those that are troubled with the belly-ache or the pains of colic."

Native Americans smoked the dried leaves to relieve lung congestion. During the Civil War (1861-1865), the Confederates turned to mullein to treat respiratory problems when their conventional medical supplies ran out.

Germany's Commission E has approved mullein flowers to be used as an expectorant for inflammation of the upper

respiratory tract.

**Attributes**

Key Components: (including, but not limited to)

Vitamins A • B1 (thiamine) • B2 (riboflavin) • B3 (niacin) • B5 (pantothenic acid) • B6 (pyridoxine) • B9 (folic acid) • B12 (cobalamin) • Biotin • Choline • Inositol • PABA (Para-Amino Benzoic Acid) • D

Iron • Magnesium • Potassium • Sulfur

Verbascoside • Mucilage

Mullein has a high mineral content of iron, magnesium, potassium and sulfur.

Verbascoside, the active ingredient isolated in mullein, shows antiseptic, antitumor, antibacterial, and immunosuppressant activities.

The leaves are high in mucilage (soft and slippery sugar molecules) that protects and soothes mucous membranes and inflamed tissues.

*General*

Mullein is one of the most important known plants for its ability to reduce swelling in the glandular system and heal serous (blood) vessels and mucous membranes. It has numerous medicinal uses, but is principally employed in the treatment of lung disease, coughs, consumption and hemorrhage of the respiratory organs.

*Lungs and Respiratory Tract*

Mullein has a special affinity for the respiratory organs, and is valuable for all pulmonary complaints. It strengthens sinuses and allows for free breathing. Mullein provides mucilaginous protection to mucous surfaces, inhibiting the absorption of allergens through mucous membranes. As an anti-spasmodic and astringent herb, it helps reduce swollen membranes and relieve painful seizing in the respiratory system.

The plant helps to alleviate chest ailments by clearing the lungs of excess phlegm and reducing bronchial and lymphatic congestion. Mullein quiets coughs and mucous membranes. As a bacteriostatic, it has been used to treat tuberculosis for centuries. Science confirms mullein's antiviral activity against herpes simplex and influenza viruses.

Taken internally, mullein is also good for lung hemorrhaging and shortness of breath. It stops the escape of fluids from ruptured vessels, and rids the body of toxins.

<i>Urinary Tract</i>	Mullein is used in kidney formulas to soothe inflammation, increase the flow of urine, and strengthen the renal system.
<i>Pain</i>	Mullein helps relieve pain, and calm inflamed and irritated nerves. It is very effective for swollen joints. The herb has mild narcotic properties (blunts the senses, reduces pain, and may induce sleep) without being poisonous or harmful. The seeds of some mullein species when thrown into the water are said to be strong enough to intoxicate fish, and have been used by poachers for that purpose.
<i>Ear</i>	Mullein oil is considered one of the best remedies for earaches and ear infections.
<i>Digestion</i>	Mullein heals the mucous membranes lining the bowels. A mullein infusion is generally given to relieve diarrhea. When bleeding of the bowels is present, a stronger decoction prepared with milk is recommended. Mullein is also used for relief of hemorrhoidal pain and swelling.
<b>Herb Parts Used</b>	Leaves, flowers, fruit, and root
<b>Preparations and Remedies</b>	Do not use dried flowers that have turned brown. The leaves become dark green when they are dried.
<i>Powdered</i>	The combination of three parts mullein and one part lobelia is used for glandular problems including thyroid, swollen lymph glands, breasts, male testicles, etc.
<i>Infusions</i>	<p><b>Mullein infusions must be strained to remove the fine downy hairs of the herb. Hairs may cause intolerable itching in the mouth and throat.</b></p> <p>Use an extract, tea infusion, or inhale the smoke of the burning herb for bronchial problems. Inhaled steam is also useful for bronchial and lung conditions.</p> <p><i>Mullein Tea:</i>  1 ounce Mullein leaves, cut  1/2 pint Distilled Water</p> <p>Pour boiling water over leaves. Cover and steep for 15 minutes. Strain through muslin (to filter out the hairs), sweeten with honey to taste or add 1 ounce glycerine to preserve. Cool, bottle and store in a cool place. Take 2-3 ounces (or more), 3-4 times a day as warranted. Mullein tea is useful for coughs, colds, asthma, and respiratory diseases.</p>

For sinusitis, snuff a teaspoon of tea up each nostril, several times a day (but not enough to irritate the condition).

Drink an infusion made with flowers to induce sleep, relieve pain or, in large doses, as a laxative.

*Yarrow – Mullein Tea:* (see YARROW preparations)

### *Decoctions*

The taste of a mullein decoction is bland and mucilaginous and roughly four times the strength of a normal infusion. It is more astringent and soothing. When working with advanced conditions, use the stronger decoction of leaves and flowers alone, or in combination with comfrey root and garlic juice.

#### *Strong Decoction:*

4 ounces Mullein leaves and flowers (equal parts), cut  
3 pints Distilled Water  
4 ounces Glycerine

Place the herb in a pan and cover with distilled water. Bring to a boil and simmer slowly for 15 minutes. Strain, press, return the liquid to a clean pot, and reduce to 1 pint liquid. Add the glycerine while hot, allow to cool, bottle, and keep refrigerated.

Take 1 tablespoon, 3-4 times daily (may be taken in much larger doses). A child's dose is 1 teaspoon, 3-4 times daily.

#### *For diarrhea, dysentery and bleeding of the bowels:*

Boil one ounce mullein herb in one pint of raw milk for a few minutes, strain and take in half-cup doses after each bowel elimination. Milk from an animal source is used like a glue to adhere the mullein to the lining of the bowel. Mullein tea may also be used as an enema for double application.

### *Fomentations*

#### *Breathe Easy Mullein and Lobelia Fomentation:*

2 ounces Mullein  
1/2 ounce Lobelia herb powder  
1 teaspoon Cayenne  
2 quarts Raw Apple Cider Vinegar  
Simmer ingredients in vinegar, closely covered, for 15 minutes. Take from heat and strain.

Soak a towel infusion and place as warm as can be tolerated over the lungs or other affected areas. Use for bronchitis, croup, cough, rheumatism, stiff joints, mumps, glandular

	<p>swellings, and dropsy.</p> <p><i>For Burns:</i> Apply juice of mullein leaves mixed with apple cider vinegar.</p> <p><i>Poultice</i> Apply as a poultice for swollen glands, stiff neck and mumps. Apply bruised leaves for diaper rash.</p> <p><i>Oil</i> <i>Mullein Oil:</i> 2 ounces Mullein flowers dried Sufficient Extra Virgin Olive Oil</p> <p>Place mullein flowers into a jar or wide-mouthed bottle, cover with olive oil up to an inch above the flowers. Stopper and shake well. Place in a warm place or expose to the sun for 7-14 days, shaking well every day. When using fresh mullein flowers, instead of using a lid, cover the top of the bottle with several layers of cheesecloth secured by an elastic band, to allow moisture to escape.</p> <p>When maceration (soaking to soften and release constituents) is complete, carefully pour off the oil from the flower sediment, press oil through cheese cloth or unbleached muslin, and store in a dark glass bottle in the refrigerator.</p> <p>Put two to six drops of the warmed oil in the ear overnight for two to three times daily until healed. Let it absorb for a few minutes, then cover with a clean cotton ball if needed. Rub oil on any area that is swollen or irritated. Mullein oil makes a good ointment for bruises and frostbite.</p> <p><i>Vermicide and Parasiticide:</i> Take one teaspoonful mullein oil internally, three to four times daily.</p> <p><i>For Hemorrhoids:</i> Apply mullein ointment topically and take the tea internally. If hemorrhoids are inflamed, apply fomentation (or wash) of a hot tea (or decoction) made from the leaves.</p>
<p><b>Safety</b></p>	<p>Mullein leaves and flowers are on the U.S. Federal Drug Administration's GRAS (generally recognized as safe) list.</p> <p>Mullein hairs may irritate the skin, or if swallowed, the mouth and throat.</p>
<p><b>Plant Profile</b></p>	<p><i>Natural Habitat:</i></p>

Mullein is widespread in Europe, temperate Asia and North America. It grows on banks, roadsides, waste ground, and slovenly kept fields. It prefers gravel, sandy or chalky soils.

*Description*

Mullein is a biennial (grows for at least 2 years before dying) that produces a rosette of large (6-15 inches long), fuzzy, gray-green leaves the first year, and it adds an attractive spike that grows 1-4 feet in height with light yellow flowers the second year.

The straight, stout, unbranched stalk and large thick leaves are velvety and flannel-like with branched downy hairs. The leaves are arranged such that the smaller leaves above drop the rain upon the larger ones below, directing the water to the roots.

Flowers appear the second year, here and there along the spike, in July and August. Each flower has five golden-yellow rounded petals with a large number of tiny white hairs. These hairs are full of sap and attract bees and flies. The nectar is readily accessible, though the supply is not very great.

The fruit is a capsule or pod. While the herb has a bitter taste, the odor of the flowers is faint and rather pleasant.

*Growing Mullein*

Mullein grows freely in certain low mountain locations, and it may easily be propagated in most medicinal gardens. Be sure that the soil is not too rich. Mullein seems to thrive in the poorest of soils. Germination takes about 10 days.

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