



# Mullein

*Verbascum thapsus*

Mullein first appears in late fall and winter as a somewhat large rosette of light green, fuzzy oval leaves that usually survive the coldest of winters. It can be found growing wild almost anywhere in sunny or part shade areas.

By late spring, a large flower stalk emerges from the center. In mediaeval times, the flower heads were dipped in wax and used as torches.

Mullein flowers bloom a few at a time, so you can pick and set them to dry as they form. The flowers are soaked in olive oil for two weeks, then strained. You can use the infused oil for ear drops when there is pain in the ear or as a rub for sore muscles.

Mullein leaves can be harvested almost year-round from the time the rosettes appear in late fall, until it goes to seed in summer when the leaves will deteriorate.

Mullein leaves are best known in herbal medicine as a remedy for relieving coughs. It is also said to have anti-bacterial and pain-relieving properties.

Mullein leaves are usually taken as an infusion, but a tincture may also be used. When making a tincture with mullein leaves, use half as much dried herb as you would most plants. The dried leaves of Mullein swell more than most alcohol due to their bulk from the fuzziness of the plant. The leaves will blacken if they swell and don't stay completely covered with alcohol. Whichever method you might use, be sure to strain the mixture so the little hairs don't get caught in your throat.

Mullein leaves and flowers can also be incorporated into a home-made cough syrup (see syrup recipe on the Violets page.) Some people choose to smoke the leaves to relieve congestions, but perhaps putting some in hot water and inhaling the steam might be a healthier option.

If you are really in a bind, Mullein's soft fuzzy leaves can be a substitute for toilet paper!

