

Common mullein

Verbascum thapsus

Description

Used for its medicinal properties as an emollient and astringent. Used to make dyes and torches.

Habit

Erect, biannual herb, grows 5-10 ft in height. 1st year produces a low vegetative rosette up to 24 in in diameter, remains through the winter, then produces a stout flowering stem in the succeeding growing season. Root system is comprised of a deep taproot and fibrous roots.

Leaves

Alternate, oblong-obovate to obovate-lanceolate, blue-gray green in color, woolly and 4-16 in long including petiole. Become progressively smaller up the flowering stem.

Stems

Erect, densely woolly with branched hairs.

Flowers

Sessile (attached to stem), borne in long terminal





spikes, bright yellow in color, 5 fused petals and 1 in in diameter. Plants die after flowering.

Fruits and Seeds

Fruits are woolly oval capsules that split open when mature, releasing 100,000-180,000 seeds from the parent plant. Seeds are dispersed by wind and animals, and may remain viable in the soil for over 100 years.

Habitat

Native to Asia and Europe. Found in neglected meadows, forest openings, pastures, fence rows, roadsides, and industrial areas. Common in areas with an average annual precipitation of 20-60 in.

Reproduction

By seed.

Similar

Moth Mullein (*Verbascum blattaria*).

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Hand pull before seed set, bag and dispose of plants to prevent spread. Effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate or triclopyr. For some sites, applications can be made during the early spring when most other non-target vegetation is dormant. Natural enemies include two insects, the European curculionid weevil (*Gymnaetron tetrum*) and the Mullein moth (*Cucullia verbasci*).

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