

## TEASEL



***Dipsacus fullonum***

[DIP-suh-kus FUL-oh-num]

**Family:** Dipsacaceae

**Names:** Cardencha, Common Teasel, Common Teazle, Fontinne Di Mouchon, Fuller's Teasel, Fuller's Teazle, Wild Teasel; Gnafos (Greek); Cardere sauvage, Cardere a foulon (French); Wilde Karde (German)

**Description:** Perennial with a spiny ridged stem growing to 6 feet. Has lance-shaped leaves and lilac-colored flowers blooming from hooked heads. It is hardy to zone 5. It is in flower from July to August, and the seeds ripen from August to October. The flowers are hermaphrodite and are pollinated by bees. The

plant is self-fertile. It is noted for attracting wildlife.

**Cultivation:** Common throughout Europe and western Asia, teasel thrives in open areas, roadsides and banks. It is cultivated only on a small scale. Succeeds in most soils but prefers clay. Prefers a deep rich soil. Requires a sunny position. A good butterfly plant. Seed - best sown in early spring in situ. The seed can also be sown from February to May or from August to October. All but the earlier sowings can be made outdoors. The root is unearthed in late summer.

**History:** Teasel heads are perhaps best known as implement to card wool and they are still used to comb certain cloths, notably the green baize used on billiard tables. This is the true wild species of teasel, its bracts are too flexible to be used for combing cloth. The flowering heads are much prized by flower arrangers because they keep their color almost indefinitely when dried. Medicinally, the root was used to treat conditions such as warts, fistulae, and cancerous sores. The water that collects in the leaf was called "Venus's bath" by early herbalists and was thought to be very beneficial for the eyes.

**Constituents:** Contains inulin, bitter substances and a scabioside

**Properties:** Cancer; Diaphoretic; Diuretic; Homeopathy; Skin; Stomachic; Warts.

**Medicinal Uses:** Teasel root is not much used medicinally today, and its therapeutic applications are disputed. It is thought to have diuretic, sweat-inducing, and stomach-soothing properties, cleansing the system and improving

digestion. Due to its apparent astringency, teasel is considered helpful in diarrhea. It is also thought to increase appetite, to tone the stomach, and to act on the liver, helping with jaundice and gallbladder problems. An infusion of the leaves has been used as a wash to treat acne. The plant has a folk history of use in the treatment of cancer, an ointment made from the roots is used to treat warts, wens and whitlows. There is no clear picture of teasel's actions, but its closeness to the thistle family means it might well reward careful investigation.

*Homeopathy:* A homeopathic remedy is made from the flowering plant. It is used in the treatment of skin diseases.

**Other Uses:** A blue dye obtained from the dried plant is an indigo substitute. It is water soluble. A yellow is obtained when the plant is mixed with alum.

*Dye Recipe:*

1 pot teasel

2 tsp copper

4 gallons water

1 lb wool

Chop up the plant, being sure that you wear gloves. Cover them with water and boil them for an hour. Strain out the plant material, and add enough water to bring it up to 4 gallons. Dissolve the copper in the dye bath. Put the wool into another pot, heat it, and transfer it to the dye ooze with no drop in temperature. Simmer it for ¾ hour, cool and rinse. Color: olive green; with alum: soft yellow.

**References:**

Dyeing the Natural Way, Frances E. Mustard, Greatlakes Living Press, 1977; ISBN: 0-915498-68-5

Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants

Plants for a Future Database

**Resources:**

Companion Plants, [www.companionplants.com](http://www.companionplants.com)  
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