

Common Name: **Teasel**

Genus: *Dipsacus*

Species: *sylvestris (also fullonum)*

Family: Caprifoliaceae

AKA: Venus' Basin, Lip of Venus, Bath of Venus, Card Thistle, Barber's Brush, Brushes and Combs, Church Broom



Historical Uses

Medical: “But ye root of this being sod with wine, & beaten, taking ye thickness of a Cerat, being put in healeth ye chaps, & fistulas in the seat. But the medicine must be layed up in brasen box: they say also that it is a cure of ye Myrmeciae & hanging warts. But ye worms of ye heads being bound up in a purse, & hanged about the neck or the arme, are sayd to cure such as have quartanes.” (1)

“An ointment made from the bruised roots is good not only for warts and wens, but also against cankers and fistulas. Other old writers have recommended an infusion of the root for strengthening the stomach and creating an appetite. Also for removing obstructions of the liver, and as a remedy for jaundice.” (2)



Teasel in flower.

“Cured anal fissures, fistulas, and inward hemorrhoids, eased inflamed stomachs, boils, abscesses and ulcers, healed wounds, dried discharge from ulcerated ears, and stopped bloody sputum, internal hemorrhaging, and menstrual flux. Strongly diuretic it was given in cases of poisoned bites and fistulas of the womb.” (3)

Ornamental: “It is now planted as an ornamental for its dried flower heads.” (4)

Household: “But the principal use of the Teazle, dating from long before Gerard’s time, still remains unchallenged, and that is for wool ‘fleecing,’ or raising the nap on woollen cloth. The cultivated variety, *D. Fullonum*, Gerard’s ‘Tame Teasell’ is used, because, as already mentioned, its



View of the leaf and stem juncture where moisture is gathered. See **Other**

spines are crooked not straight. These heads are fixed on the rim of a wheel or on a cylinder, which is made to revolve, against the surface of the cloth to be ‘fleeced,’ thus raising the nap. Its great utility is that while raising the nap, it will yet break at any serious obstruction, whereas all metallic substances in such a case would cause the cloth to yield first and tear the material.” (5)

Folklore/Astrology: “It was cool and dry in the third degree, was both feminine and masculine kinds and prevented intermittent fevers when larvae from the flower heads were hung about the neck in a small bag. It is a plant of Venus, and was hung up in cottages to predict weather by changes in its appearance” (6)

Other: “The water found standing in the hollow of the leaves is commended as a collyrium to cool inflammations of the eyes and as a cosmetic to render the face fair.” (7)

“The English name, Teazel, is from the Anglo-Saxon *tæson*, signifying to tease cloth, and refers to the use of the flower-heads by cloth-workers” (8)

Contemporary Uses:

“Teasel root is not much used medically 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. There is no clear picture of teasel’s actions, but its closeness to the fissile family means it might well reward careful investigation.” (9)

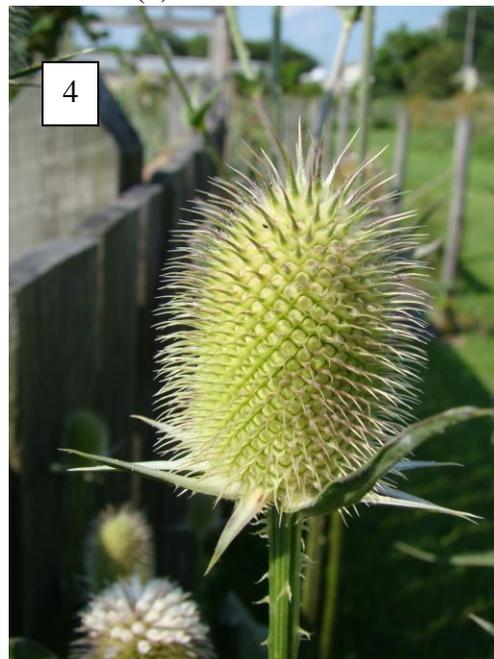


Image at Right: Note the basal whorl of spiny bracts. Flowers first begin opening in a belt around the middle of the flower head, and then move toward the top and bottom forming two narrow belts.

Area of Origin: Throughout Europe and Asia Minor

Physical description: “It also is of the prickly plants, but it hath an high stalke full of prickles, & leaves compassing ye stalk, like lettuce, two at everie knot, tall, and they prickly, having as it were some prickly bladders upon ye middle of ye back both within and without, and hollow spaces about ye 2 (joining) parts of ye leaves, so that it gathers waters from the dews & showers, whence also it drew the name. But on ye top of ye stalk at every shoot one head like an hedgehog somewhat long and prickly. But being dried it shows white, but he had being divided hath also small worms about ye middle of the pith.” (10)

“Perennial with a spiny ridged stem growing to 6 feet (2m). Has lance -shaped leaves and lilac colored flowers blooming from hooked heads.” (11)

Plant type: Biennial

Height: 4-5 feet

Flower color: Pale Purple

Hardiness zone: USDA 4-8



View of the seed head when mature and dried out. Used for carding wool.

Sources

1. Dioscorides, bk. 3, plant 13
2. Grieve p.794
3. Anderson p.109
4. Anderson p.109
5. Grieve p. 793
6. Anderson p. 109
7. Culpeper p. 179
8. Grieve p.793
9. Chevallier, p. 202
10. Dioscorides, book 3, plant 13
11. Chevallier, p. 202

Illustrations/Images:

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|-----------------|------|
| 1. Drach Herbal | 1490 |
| 2. PSUMG | 2015 |
| 3. PSUMG | 2015 |
| 4. PSUMG | 2015 |
| 5. PSUMG | 2016 |