

“What gives me the most hope every day is God’s grace, knowing that His grace is going to give me the strength for whatever I face, knowing that nothing is a surprise to God.”

- **Rick Warren**

This quote is perfect for me right now as I try to adjust to my new normal of life with my son now living almost 9 hours away for me. Fortunately, the move went smoothly and it was comforting for me to see his new apartment and meet his new roommate. I wasn’t really sure how I was going to survive leaving him there and getting on a plane to fly home alone. But fortunately, God gave me the strength to do it. It doesn’t mean leaving him there, in a new place where doesn’t know anyone was easy, but it means that God doesn’t give us more than we can handle and He is in control of it all. When I got home, it certainly wasn’t easy to go into his empty room, but He gave me the strength to do it. Whatever challenges you may be facing, always be prepared for the worst, but hope for the best. There really is no medicine better than hope during these trying days. But hope and faith together are truly a powerhouse combination. As I move forward to each new day and work on adapting to my new normal in the latest chapter in my book of life, I’m reminded of a quote from Maya Angelou: *“My great hope is to laugh as much as I cry; to get my work done and try to love somebody and have the courage to accept the love in return.”* I thank God that I have all those things. Remember, no matter how dark a current moment may be, the fact that love and hope are always possible should illuminate your way.

Medicine Could be Growing in Your Yard



Continuing my theme of using food as medicine, I’m excited to tell you that I have a natural healer right in my own yard! How many of you are familiar with mullein? I learned about it years ago, but actually forgot about it until my boyfriend noticed it growing in several areas on my property.

What is mullein? Mullein is a plant native to North Africa, Asia and Europe that was introduced to the U.S. around the mid-1700s. It’s part of the snapdragon family and spread pretty rapidly across the country, so much so that by the early 1800s, it was being described as a native plant. It tends to thrive in dry sandy soils and can typically be found along roadsides, neglected meadows, wood edges (which is where mine are growing) and pastures. It’s considered a short-lived perennial and has deep roots. There are over 200 species of mullein around the world. In its first year of life, its leaves are like felt and are low growing. The leaves, which are bluish gray-green, are oblong in shape and range from 4 to 12 inches long and 1 to 5 inches wide. They are also densely covered in hairs, which are quite soft. In order for it to flower in the spring, it must be exposed to cold temperatures during the winter. By the second year of its life, mullein grows to 5 to 10 feet tall and is usually one giant stalk, with small yellow, 5-petaled flowers grouped densely at the top. The above picture is from one of the many mullein plants growing on my land.

Its fruit looks like a rounded capsule and when it matures, splits in two. A capsule houses dozens of tiny brown seeds, which are 6-sided and have wavy ridges and deep grooves. Each plant produces 200-300 of these seed capsules and each of those contain 500-800 seeds. That translates to anywhere from 100,000 to 240,000 seeds per plant. **NEVER** eat the seeds. After it flowers, the entire plant dies, but its seeds remain viable for decades in the soil where they fell. They do need light in order to germinate, so those that are buried and don’t receive any sunlight won’t grow.

Many people consider mullein to be a weed, but it’s actually a powerful remedy touted by many holistic therapists. Its healing properties are found in its roots, leaves and flowers and its benefits are pretty startling. That’s why I wanted to share information about this special plant with you. Here are just a few of those benefits.

- It’s a natural painkiller, 10,000 times stronger than Ibuprofen.
- It relieves digestive disorders such as stomach pains, cramps and diarrhea.
- Its anti-bacterial properties make it effective in treating infections, including tuberculosis.
- It’s a natural remedy for urinary tract infections.
- It’s a natural treatment for many inflammatory diseases.
- It’s a natural treatment for asthma and bronchitis.
- It’s a natural cure for earaches (see below) and headaches.
- It helps clear mucus from the airways, lungs and trachea.

- The tea is easy to make (see below) and is effective in treating respiratory issues as well as sore throats, tonsillitis, and coughs. You can soak a piece of dry cloth in the tea and apply it to an inflamed joint to relieve pain. You can also make cough syrup using the flowers and sugar.
- When used topically, it can reduce swelling as well as skin conditions such as burns, rashes, cuts, blisters and skin infections. It can also speed up the healing process for wounds and bruises as well as soothe the pain caused by arthritis
- It provides Vitamins C, B-complex, E and D as well as iron, potassium and magnesium. Drinking the tea can boost bone health and reduce hunger cravings, potentially helping with weight loss.
- An infusion made from its flowers shows antiviral activity against several flu strains as well as the Herpes simplex virus.
- Extracts of the leaf have been shown to possess antitumor, antiviral, antifungal properties.
- It has a calming effect and can be used as a sleep aid.
- It supports proper functioning of the thyroid gland.

Some out-of-the-box uses for mullein are as follows:

- Use the leaves to cushion shoes and provide warmth when it's cold. They can also insulate an emergency blanket.
- Dried seed pods and leaves can be used to start a fire.
- The stalks can be used to create a friction fire.
- The leaves are soft (though a bit hairy) and can be used as toilet paper. Please note that for people with sensitive skin, it may trigger a rash, but it will be short-lived.

If you decide to try mullein, don't use a plant you find along the side of the road or areas prone to pesticides, herbicides or car exhaust. You can't be sure of its safety and cleanliness, so it's best to grow your own or buy from an organic supplier.

Mullein is generally well tolerated by most people, however, children and pregnant or breastfeeding women should avoid drinking the tea without discussing it with a trusted doctor. Additionally, for people with diabetes and those taking diuretics, Advil or Aleve or any medicine that thins the blood (aspirin, Coumadin, warfarin, etc.), mullein can cause serious side effects. So again, be sure to talk to a trusted doctor prior to consuming.

Mullein Oil Recipe for Earaches

- 1/4 cup fresh mullein flower (you can also use dried flowers)
- olive oil

Directions: Place the mullein flowers in a small glass jar with a lid. Cover the mullein flowers with olive oil and allow it to sit in a warm area for several days. If using fresh mullein flowers, cover your jar with cheesecloth rather than a lid to allow moisture to escape. Strain the oil through cheesecloth and store your oil in a small dropper bottle in the refrigerator. Be sure to label and date it.

To use: Warm the oil to body temperature by placing the bottle of oil in a glass of hot water for a few minutes. Insert 2-3 drops in the affected ear 2-3 times per day.

Mullein Tea

Simply steep the leaves in hot water. If you want it sweeter, add the flowers. You can drink the tea hot or cold. Any excess can be stored in the refrigerator until you're ready to drink it.

I hope you've found this information helpful. Mullein is super easy to grow and will thrive in just about any garden. I'm super excited to have such easy access to it and will be adding it to my arsenal of natural remedies.

Have a wonderful month.