

Dipsacus fullonum

[Synonyms : *Dipsacus fullonum* var. *sylvestris*, *Dipsacus sativus*, *Dipsacus sylvestris*]

FULLER'S TEASEL is a biennial. Native to Europe it has egg-shaped heads of lilac-coloured flowers covered in hooked spines.

It is also known as Adam's flannel, Barber's brushes, Brushes, Brushes and combs, Buttons, *Carda* (Spanish), *Cardaon sauvâge* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Cardencha* (Spanish), Card thistle, Card teasel, Card thistle, *Chardon à bonnetier* (French), *Chardon à foulon* (French), Church broom, Cleavers, Clothes brush, Clothier's brush, *Coban daragi* (Turkish), Cock's comb, Comb and brush, Common teasel, Common teazle, *Crib y Pannwr* (Welsh), *Dissaco* (Italian), Donkey's thistle, Draper's teasel, English thistle, Fairies' broom, Fairies' fire, *Fontana degli uecelli* (Italian), *Fuldipsako* (Esperanto), Fuller's teasle, Fuller's teazle, Fuller's thistle, *Gærde-Kartebolle* (Danish), Gipsy's comb, Hairbrush, Hutton weed, Indian thistle, Johnny-prick-finger, *Kaarddissel of Pluisdissel* (Afrikaans), *Kardendistel* (German), *Kardtistel* (Swedish), *Kardvädd* (Swedish), Lady's brush-and-comb, Lady's brushes, Little brushes, Our Lady's basin, Pincushion, Poor man's brush, Prickly back, Prickly beehives, Prickyback, Shepard's staff, Shepherd's rod, Shepherd's staff, Shepherd's thistle, *Štetka lesná* (Slovak), *Štětka lesní* (Czech), *Štětka planá* (Czech), Sweep's brushes, *Tcheurdron à chorchi* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), Teasel, Teazel, Venus' basin, Venus' bath, Venus' cup, Venus' cup teasel, *Vild kardvädd* (Swedish), *Vollers kaarden* (Dutch), Water thistle, *Weberkarde* (German), *Wilde Karde* (German), Wild teasel, Wild teazel, and Wood broom; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of importunity, and misanthropy.

The flowers open from the centre of the head up and down. New flowers open daily and eventually form two separated bands of colour.

Fullonum means 'of fullers' ie. of/used by those who scoured and beat woollen cloth to finish or clean it.

This plant is probably best known for its use in raising the nap on woollen cloth. The heads of the dried plant, with their tiny hooked spines, were/are mounted on boards or frames and fixed to a large wheel. This arrangement is then set to revolve above the material so that the heads just brush its surface.

The arms granted in 1530 to the Clothworkers' Company, one of the earlier English liveried companies, display a teasel cob and a golden teasel head.

Fuller's teasel used to be interrogated as a weather oracle for which the closed prickles would indicate rain.

The plant came to be known to some North American Indians. Conventionally the Navajo tribe used it to card (or comb) wool, while the Iroquois (who believed that the ground roots were poisonous) washed some skin problems, such as acne, with a leaf infusion.

It was used cosmetically, particularly for the removal of spots, and water trapped in the leaves was believed to ease sore eyes.

Flower heads (of this species or a variety of it) can still be used today for raising the nap on cloth (cloth such as the green baize found on card and billiard tables).

Medicinally, herbalists recommended the plant for the treatment of abscesses and warts, as well as for worms in the ears. Today the flowering plant is used in homoeopathic treatments.

