

Wild Teasel

Dipsacus fullonum

Leadán úcaire



Teasel is a robust, tall biennial which can grow to 6 feet or more. All parts of the plant have spines - leaves, stalks and egg shaped flower heads. The plant and seed heads persist into winter, providing a bit of structural interest in a wildlife area when other plants have died back. A robust biennial herb, Teasels are common in rough grassland, wood margins, thickets and hedgerows, also on roadsides and waste ground over a very wide range of soil types. It fruits prolifically, and often colonises bare ground after disturbance.

In its first year it forms a rosette of serrated, spiny leaves and in the second year its angled, prickly stems rise up stiffly, by July producing unmistakable, egg-shaped flower heads. These are covered with spiny little bracts and rings of blue-purple flowers. Below the bristly flower heads are whorls of bracts like long, skinny fingers holding them aloft. The stem leaves are opposite and joined at their bases, so collecting water. In autumn the flower heads remain, full of dry and papery seeds.

This is a great flower in any wildflower garden. The little pools formed at the base of the stem leaves provide a supply of water for insects, the flowers attract pollinators while the seeds are a favorite of Goldfinches.

The spiny heads of Teasels were used throughout the ages to comb or raise the nap on woolen cloth, being gentler than any metal combs.