

# Common mullein

*Verbascum thapsus L.*

Figwort family

## Key identifying traits

- ❑ 1st year rosette of soft, fuzzy, light green leaves
- ❑ 2nd year; large fuzzy alternate overlapping leaves and a single, stout erect stem, 2 to 8 feet tall
- ❑ One or more long terminal flower spikes per stem
- ❑ Flowers are 5 lobed and sulfur to pale yellow color developing as flower spike extends
- ❑ Numerous tiny, angular, brownish seeds in 2-chambered capsules
- ❑ Tall brown stalks from previous season easily seen all year-remain standing throughout winter

## Biology and ecology

- Biennial from a stout tap root
- Seeds are viable for 70 years and omnipresent
- Existing seed supply will yield plants when soil is exposed by fire or other disturbance
- Unpalatable to livestock due to soft, fine hairs
- Flowers and seed production from June to August
- Prefers dry, sunny, gravelly sites but will appear on various exposed soils-one of the first weeds to move into or germinate in disturbed sites

## Control

*Prevention* - Learn to identify plants; know your property; minimize exposed soil and overgrazing; don't play sword-fights with the stalks which is a great way to spread the seeds!

*Biological* - None present and no current research

*Cultural* - Good vegetative cover and management are the best means to avoid proliferation of mullein

*Mechanical* - Will not stand tillage; pulling or cutting below root crown when the soil is damp is effective if done prior to seed production

*Chemical* - A few are effective but only if combined with a surfactant to aid in penetration past the hairs

*Where found* - Seed supply in soils throughout Stevens County with plants occurring frequently any newly disturbed soil.



mature 2<sup>nd</sup> year plants & old flowering stalk