

Dandelion



Scientific name: *Taraxacum officinale*

Other names: Pis-a-lit, Paardenbloem, Dent de lion.

Plant family: Asteraceae, Aster family

Plant type: Perennial

Appearance: Fast growing to 30cm tall, 50cm wide. Deep green long toothed leaves, with a smooth rib running underneath, along length of leaf. Leaves grow in rosette from the tap root. Yellow-orange composite flower on long stalk. Several flowers per plant. Later,

characteristic balls of wind dispersed seeds (Dandelion clocks).

Growing conditions

Prefers moist rich soil but can grow in most soils, even near to sea.

pH - Acid, neutral and alkaline soils.

Semi-shade (light woodland) to full sun.

Dandelion roots produce ethylene gas which inhibits the growth of other nearby plants and speeds up the ripening of nearby fruit.

The roots and leaves can be used to make a useful fertiliser. When added to compost heaps, they speed up decomposition.

Properties

Aperient; Cholagogue; Depurative; Diuretic; Hepatic; Hypoglycaemic; Laxative; Stomachic; Tonic; Warts.

Medicinal Uses

Digestive system: Stimulating, dyspepsia. Liver and gallbladder disorders, constipation. Warts, verrucas; with latex sap from stalks. Joint and skin complaints. Urinary tract infections.

Foraging Notes

All parts can be harvested and used throughout the year. Roots, leaves, seeds, flowers, stalks. Young leaves are less bitter.



Harvest 2-3 leaves per strong plant. Fresh leaves regrow quickly. Flowers throughout spring, summer. 2 year old roots, traditionally harvested in autumn. Leaves traditionally in spring but good all year.

Wild food



Dandelion leaves contain protein, carbohydrate, calcium, phosphorus, iron, sodium, potassium, magnesium, vitamin A, vitamin B1, vitamin B2 & vitamin C.

- Dandelion and Burdock
- Flower honey infusion
- Dandelion wine / mead
- Bitter addition to smoothies

- Lightly saute in olive oil and garlic
- In a mixed salads
- Flower fritters
- Closed flower bud capers, in vinegar
- Dandelion coffee from roasted roots
- Dandelion tea, from roots, flowers or leaves.

Wildlife notes

Dandelions are generally thought of as weeds but they are very helpful to wildlife and both edible and medicinal to us. They are well worth welcoming into a garden.

Dandelion flowers are insect pollinated and attract many different insect species.

Most probably the single most valuable early spring wildflower is the dandelion. If a beehive survives the winter, beekeepers know the bees will be safe from starvation if they can stay alive until dandelions bloom. The flowers are rich in pollen and nectar.

Dandelion gives the bees a huge boost and adds to the health and wellbeing of the hive. So a very simple, easy way to help honey bees is to refrain from killing the dandelions in your garden.

They also attract several other beneficial insects such as ladybirds and lacewings. These help keep the balance of nature by feeding on aphids. They visit dandelions for the pollen laden flowers.