

# Dandelion Medicine

Remedies and  
Recipes to

- Detoxify
- Nourish
- Stimulate

**Brigitte Mars, Herbalist AHG**

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Remedies and Recipes to  
Detoxify  
Nourish  
Stimulate

Brigitte Mars,  
Herbalist AHG



Schoolhouse Road  
Pownal, Vermont 05261

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*DEDICATION*

*To my beloved daughter,  
Sunflower Sparkle Mars*

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*Dandelion!*  
*Don't you be cryin'*  
*We're doing our best to tell the world about you!*  
*Sunshine bright*  
*You ray of light*  
*Concentrating solar energy*  
*You are free*  
*Growing all around me*  
*Blessed be*  
*Yeah God!*  
*Ray of gold*  
*I am told*  
*Helps heal people and the planet*  
*I do believe*  
*It is time to perceive*  
*The truth about weeds*  
*That fulfill so many of our needs*  
*Breathe deep the breath of life!*  
*Hurrah, Dandy Lion!*

Brigitte Mars, 1998

1

## The Virtues of the Dandelion

Dandelions may well be the world's most famous weed. Each spring they burst into a carpet of sunny yellow blossoms. The flowers open wide to greet the morning and then close toward evening. To listen to the media, with all their ads for weed killers, however, you'd think that dandelions were a serious threat to humanity when it's the herbicides that really do the harm! Every year, Americans spend millions of dollars on herbicides so that we may enjoy uniform lawns of nonnative grasses, and then use 30 percent of the nation's water supply to keep those lawns green. Meanwhile, those same herbicides poison our air, water, and ultimately our bodies.

Though dandelion today is considered by most people to be a useless weed, in truth it is one of the most beneficial and healthful of herbs. Every part of the dandelion has a use, ranging from food, to medicine, to dye. These beneficial properties did not always go unnoticed in North America: Up until the 1800s, people would actually pull the grass out of their yards to make room for dandelions and other useful "weeds" such as chickweed, malva, and chamomile.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered." The time has come again to learn the virtues of the dandelion.

## What Is a Dandelion?

It has been said that the average American recognizes more than a thousand logos for commercial products, yet recognizes fewer than five plants that grow in his or her area. For most people, the dandelion is likely to be one of these familiar plants.

## Botanical Origins

The botanical name for dandelion is *Taraxacum officinale*. The genus name, *Taraxacum*, is from the Arabic and means "bitter herb." It may have evolved from the Greek *taraxos*, a term used by Arab physicians of the early Middle Ages to mean "disorder," and *akos*, meaning "remedy." Or it could be derived from the Greek *taraxia*, meaning "eye disorder," and *akeomai*, "to cure," as dandelion was traditionally used as a remedy for the eyes.

The species name, *officinale*, tells us that the plant is or was an "official medicine," or "the plant of the apothecaries in Rome."

## What's in a Name?

The word *dandelion* is a Saxon corruption of the Norman term *dent de lion*, meaning "tooth of the lion," perhaps a reference to the serrated leaves. Each of the florets has five toothed edges, another correlation to lion's teeth. Some say the comparison to lions has to do with the flower's bright yellow color; others say simply that the plant is as strong as the tooth of a lion. The name may also symbolize the traditional astrological connection between the sun and lions. Leo (the Lion) is governed by the Sun.

## Dandy Nicknames

Dandelion has also been known by a variety of nicknames, including amarga, bitterwort, blowball, cankerwort, chicoria, clockflower, consuelda, devil's milkpail, doonhead clock, fairy

clock, fortune-teller, heart-fever grass, Irish daisy, milk gowan, milk witch, monk's head, peasant's cloak, puffball, priest's crown, sun in the grass, swine's snout, tell-time, tramp with the golden head, piss-en-lit (meaning "pee in the bed"), piddly bed, wet-a-bed, yellow gowan, and wild endive.

Each of the names has historical or cultural significance. For example, *gowan* is a Scottish word for "daisylike flower." Names such as blowball and tell-time are reminders of a traditional game: Children blow the seed heads and watch them disperse and fly away; the number left is supposed to signify the hour. When the mature flower head closes, it resembles a pig's snout; hence the nickname swine's snout. The plant is sometimes known as monk's head when all the seeds have gone, the top looks like a priest's tonsure, or shaved crown.

#### A DANDELION BY ANY OTHER NAME

Around the world dandelion is well known and named:

Chinese *chian-nou-ts'ao*, *huang-hua ti-ting*

French *piss-en-lit*

German *löwenzahn*, *kuhlblume*

Greek *radiki* (meaning "radiating from the center")

Hindi *dudhal*

Italian *dente di leone*

Japanese *hokoei*

Korean *p'ogongyong*

Mandarin *pu gong ying*

Persian *trakhasnkun* ("bitter herb")

Russian *oduvanchik*, *pushki*

Sanskrit *dughdapheni*

Spanish *diente de león*

Turkish *kara hindiba otu*, *yabani*

Welsh *dant y llew*

## Botanical Features

Dandelion is believed to be native to Greece and the Mediterranean regions of Asia Minor and Europe. It is a perennial member of the Asteraceae family, which is one of the largest groups of flowering plants and includes daisies, sunflowers, and calendula as well as lettuce and endive.

## Leaves

Dandelion is considered by botanists to be a dicot that is, a plant that bears two leaves from its germinating seed. The hollow, unbranched stems grow 2 to 18 inches high atop a rosette of shiny, hairless, coarsely toothed green leaves that are broader toward the top than at the base. The teeth of the leaves are usually directed downward. The leaves grow in a basal rosette quite an ingenious botanical design, as the natural grooving of the leaves helps to steer water to the roots of the plant.

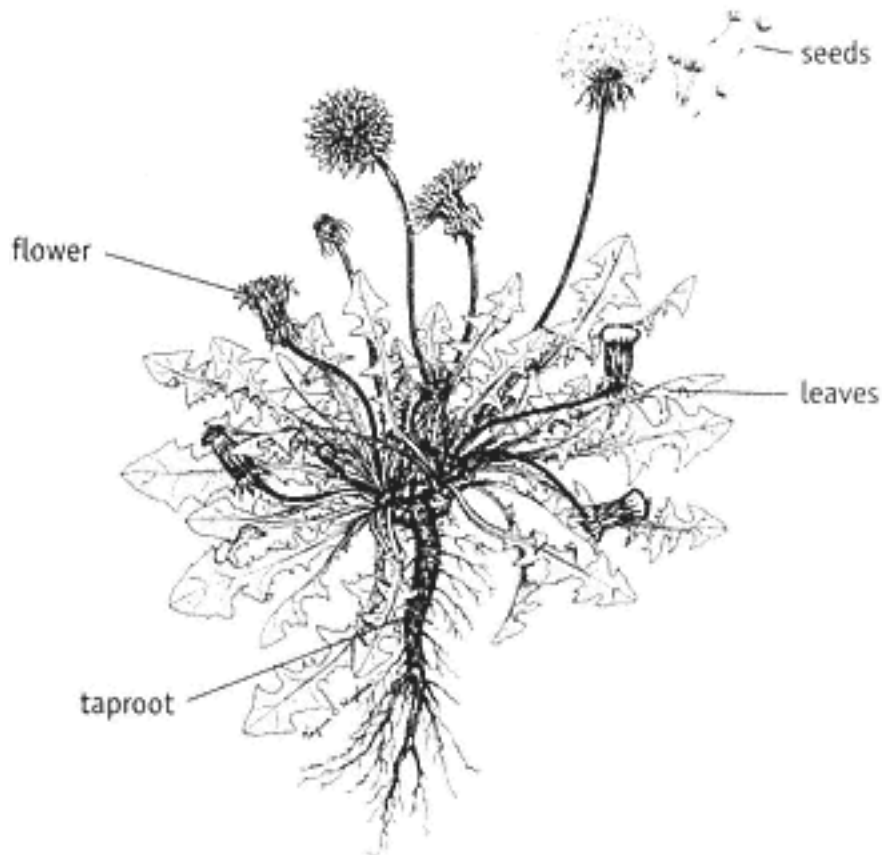
## Flowers

The plant first blooms, one yellow flower head per plant, in early spring. The blossom, measuring ½ to 2 inches in diameter, is actually a compilation of about 150 florets, each a complete tiny tube-shaped ray flower in its own right with anthers and stigmas. Each floret has five tiny teeth on its edge.

The flowering season in the northern hemisphere, where dandelions are most common, is from April to June. The blossoms close early in the evening and during cloudy weather, perhaps to protect the nectar and pollen as well as to conserve heat during cold spring nights. Dandelions are very sensitive to temperature; they bloom more when the weather is cool and the blooms clear and disappear as hot summer arrives. Dandelion has one of the longest flowering seasons of any plant, and when a warm spell occurs in an off season, it is not unusual to see the pretty yellow flowers.

Underneath the flower is a green calyx with downward-curved outer bracts. When the blossoming cycle is complete, the flower head folds up for several days, with the calyx drawn into a cylindrical shape around the ripening ovaries, before reopening to reveal its parachute-topped seeds. Dandelion is considered apomict: It produces seeds without pollination or fertilization. This bisexual tendency enables many various forms of the plant to evolve, each differ from the other in minute ways. The seeds, borne on a circular ball, are known as acheniums. They bear a feathery pappus (or tuft) and are carried on the wind often as many as 5 miles from their origin.

The ovule contains special cells that produce embryos that are identical to the parent plant. The long taproot issues from a short rhizome. All of the underground portions are dark brown on the outside, white on the inside. The root can grow up to a foot long and is milky white inside with a brown epidermis. The taproot allows the plant access to water deep in the earth so that it can survive dry spells. The entire plant contains a milky white juice.



### RELATED SPECIES

There are more than 150 useful species related to dandelion, including *Taraxacum magellanicum*, *T. erythrosperum* (red-seeded dandelion), *T. autumnalis* (fall dandelion or hawkbit), *T. ceratophorum* (horned dandelion), *T. eriophorum* and *T. scopulorum* (both Rocky Mountain dandelion), *T. ceratophyllum* (tundra dandelion), *T. lyratum* (dwarf alpine dandelion), and *Krigia virginica* (dwarf dandelion). To identify a dandelion cousin, remember that dandelions grow with an unbranching stem from a rosette of leaves. Any plant that has any branching characteristics is not a dandelion relation.

### Lore and Legend: How the Dandelion Came To Be

Because dandelion can be found in many parts of the world, there are many different legends and folkloric stories explaining how the dandelion came to be. Dandelions also predominate in the traditional mythology of many cultures. For example, ancient Greek mythology tells the tale of Hecate, goddess of the earth and underworld, honoring Theseus with a salad of dandelion greens after he slew the infamous Minotaur.

### Fairies and Wood Sprites

Following in the footsteps of many other creation stories, one popular legend ascribes dandelion's birth to the work of fairies. Many thousands of years ago, when the world was populated with fairies and elves, the first humans arrived. They soon caused these tiny creatures many problems, as the humans were usually unable to see the wee folk and would step on them. So the fairies took to dressing in bright yellow garments and eventually were changed into dandelions, which have the ability to spring back up if trod-

den upon. Thus, it is believed that dandelions recover so quickly from being stepped on because each contains the spirit of a fairy.

Another folkloric story tells of a miserly old man who discovered a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. He decided to hide it in the ground rather than share his good fortune. In order to think about where he would bury it, he took the gold home with him in a sack and then went to bed. While he was sleeping, a hungry mouse, in search of food, gnawed a hole in the sack.

Early the next morning, the man grabbed the sack and went to bury it. As he reached a dark part of the forest, he noticed how light the sack had become. When he looked inside, there were but a few coins left. "My gold has fallen out!" he cried. "I shall retrace my steps and pick it all back up!" Believing the nuggets would be easy to spot on the ground, he walked back and bent down to collect the shiny gold pieces. However, they had become rooted to the ground. When he looked closer, he noticed that each coin was now a golden flower. Wood sprites had transformed the coins into golden flowers for all to enjoy.

#### Native American Stories

A Native American legend holds that once a beautiful, golden-haired maiden was admired by the South Wind. The South Wind was too lazy to court her, so he lay in the shade and watched her as she smelled the flowers. He waited so long that one day, when awakening from a nap, he noticed that she was now a gray-haired woman. The South Wind blamed his brother the North Wind, believing it was he who had blown a frost upon her to whiten her golden hair. To this day, the South Wind continues to sigh for the love he may have once enjoyed.

Another Native American legend involves a golden-haired girl who fell in love with the Sun. She rejected all suitors and simply watched the Sun make his journey across the sky, although he ignored her. She grieved until she got old, frail, and gray and was blown away by the wind. The Sun, finally noticing,



felt sorry that he had not paid attention to her and could not bring her back. The Great Spirit took pity and sent small golden flowers to bloom on the prairies, and to this day the wind carries off the gray-haired seeds.

### Magic and Mystery

In the sixteenth century, Pier Andrea Mattioli, an Italian physician and author of *Commentarii in Sex Libros Pedacii Dioscorides*, wrote, "Magicians say that if a person rubs himself all over with dandelion, he will be everywhere welcome and obtain what he wishes." Rubbing your skin with dandelion juice was believed to ensure that you would receive hospitality in any home.

According to astrology, dandelion corresponds to the air element. It is governed by Jupiter and considered a masculine plant. Herbs ruled by Jupiter are cheerful, benevolent, soothing, and jovial. Dandelion is also under the dominion of the Sun, which governs plants of a bright golden color. In Ayurvedic medicine, however, dandelion is ruled by Saturn, which governs cool, bitter, and detoxifying herbs.

### The Doctrine of Signatures

The Doctrine of Signatures is a folkloric belief that plants give us hints as to what they are good for by the way they look. It has evolved from bits of astrology, alchemy, fact, and fantasy. The doctrine is founded on the belief that by observing a plant the color of its flower, the shape of its leaf or root you can determine its place in nature's plan. For example, the form of kidney beans tells us that they're good for the kidneys; blood-red beets fortify the blood; a head of cauliflower benefits the brain.

## What Dandelion Tells Us

Dandelion is a survivor. It reaches deep into the earth, making it impervious to burrowing animals and fire. The bright yellow color of the flower corresponds to the liver and thus explains its use in treating gallstones and jaundice. Because dandelion has a juicy stem and root, it was considered beneficial for increasing urine production. The roots and leaves are associated with the physical body, the yellow flowers with mental health, and the puffball seed head with emotional well-being. As the seeds fly off and return to the earth, they represent the muscular structure being calmed.

The liver is an organ that has suffered numerous assaults from chemicals in our environment. So, too, the dandelion, yet it continues to adapt and also helps the human organism to adapt. Dandelion is indeed hardy. It grows through cracks in the side-walks; thrives despite a multitude of herbicides; and can even withstand 20,000 volts of electricity. Where lawns are mowed, the dandelion keeps a very short stem, but in tall grass their stems stretch to greater height in order to catch the rays of the sun. If the leaves or flowers are cut, more grow back within a few days. It seems fitting that a plant that has adjusted so well to the environment can help humans adapt to a polluted planet while we do our best to correct the situation. The simple abundance of the dandelion may perhaps be a sign that we should be using lots of this gift of nature!

### Look Like Rain?

Dandelion flowers close up when it is about to rain, so next time you're wondering whether you need to bring along an umbrella, just check to see what your dandelion friends are doing.

## Other Folklore Beliefs

There are so many wonderful facts and much mythology about this plant! Following are just a few bits of dandelion lore that have been passed down to me.

Drinking a tea of dandelion leaves is said to promote psychic ability, especially if you drink the tea while visualizing an increase in that talent.

Maidens would blow on the seed head; the number of seeds remaining would determine how many children they would have once they married.

When a maiden blew on a dandelion seed head, if at least one seed remained, it was a sign that her sweetheart was thinking of her.

When the downy seeds blow off the dandelion and there is no wind, it will rain.

Lovers should blow dandelion seeds in the direction of their beloved to send messages of affection.

Blow on a dandelion seed head and however many seeds are left are how many more years you will live.

Make a wish and then blow on the seed head. If every single seed flies away, your wish will come true.

Growing dandelions at the northwest corner of your property is said to bring favorable winds.

In the Victorian language of flowers, dandelion signifies love. It is also a symbol of wishes, welcome, faithfulness, and divination. In some cultures it is considered good luck to dream of dandelions; in others, though, a dandelion dream portends ill fortune, indicating that the dreamer's lover was untrue.

## 2 Collecting, Growing, and Harvesting

Dandelions grow worldwide except in deserts and in the tropics. This herb seems to follow the steps of civilization and cultivation. It is especially prolific throughout the northern temperate zones and can flourish from sea level up to altitudes of 10,500 feet. There are even reports of a variety growing in the Himalayas at 18,000 feet!

### Benefits for the Soil and the Environment

Dandelion grows where the soil is healthy it is considered an indicator of the presence of potassium, magnesium, calcium, and sodium. Dandelions prefer loose, rich, well-drained, nitrogen-rich soil with neutral acidity, but they can tolerate a wide range of conditions. Because of dandelion's deep taproot, it doesn't compete with short-rooted grasses. The long roots help to aerate the soil, providing drainage channels for water, and help to heal barren or overworked soil by soaking up nutrients that have been washed downward and bringing them up toward the surface where other, shorter-rooted plants can use them sort of like an

*Where the Dandelion grows, the garden will flourish.*  
*OLD FARMERS' SAYING*

herbal earthworm: facilitating, not competing. Dandelions also help to convert nitrogen to nitrates in the soil. They are a natural humus magnet, as earthworms enjoy the soil near them (hence the Chinese nickname, "earth nail").

Dandelion growing in fruit orchards gives off ethylene gas at sunset, which helps fruit to ripen early and evenly. Not only do the fruits grow larger, but so, too, do the dandelions. They seem to have a cooperative, symbiotic relationship.

When dandelions die, the channels formed by their roots open up the earth for other plants to grow. If uprooted dandelions are added to compost, they work as an activator, speeding up the decomposition of composted material; they also help provide copper as a nutrient.

#### A Friend to Creatures

Dandelion blooms in the spring, at a time when other sources of pollen are scarce. The stigma of the flower grows through the tube formed from the anthers. The stigma pushes the pollen forward, which coats visiting insects who then carry it to other flowers and thus ensure cross-pollination. It has been reported that at-least

#### SURVIVING ON DANDELION

Should you find yourself in a survival situation with nothing to eat except old dandelion greens, boil the leaves in two changes of water to remove the bitter flavor. The plant has even been used as survival food in polar regions.

Boy Scouts learn that even the seedlike fruits (found on the stem, at the base of the parachute), though somewhat bitter, can be eaten raw in an emergency remove the plumelike hairs by rubbing the seeds in your palms to separate them from the stalks.

85 different insects are nourished by dandelions, including butterflies, wasps, flies, and beetles. Bees love it dandelion is an important plant for honey production.

Canada geese, grouse, pheasants, and many other birds eat the seeds. Purple finches are particularly attracted to dandelions. Leaves are consumed by black-and grizzly bears, chipmunks, elk, and porcupines. Goats, pigs, and rabbits will eat the whole plant. Feed dandelions to domestic rabbits, guinea pigs, and gerbils. When cows consume dandelion, they produce even more milk, though they may not relish the bitter flavor. Dandelions are a favorite food for pigs and chickens. Horses will eat dandelion greens and roots when they are cut and mixed with bran. The leaves are even fed to silkworms when their usual food, mulberry leaves, is scarce.

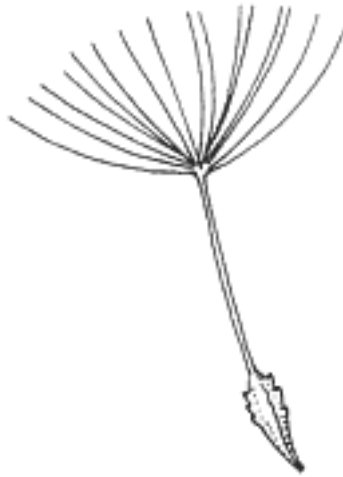
### Growing Habits

Dandelions are abundant in meadows, in waste places, along roadsides, and, of course, in lawns. The plant frequently grows where the soil has been disturbed. You'll often find dandelion as a companion to plantain, clover, and alfalfa.

*A bit of lawn, thickly starred with the glowing yellow blossoms, isn't in itself a bad picture. . . . Why not accept the beauty and find an added joy in fecundity which gives to us without trouble or cost and generally in spite of ourselves?*

*COUNTRY LIFE IN AMERICA, 1909*

The dandelion leaves lie flat, so this herb usually remains unharmed by the lawnmower. If you try to pull up the herb, so long as a small portion of the root remains in the soil, another plant will emerge. While many plant species are being lost to industrialization and the building of housing developments and shopping centers where once there were meadows, dandelions thrive in disturbed or compacted soils and near roads and highways, and will even sprout up through the cracks in your sidewalk. This herb has shown a remarkable ability to adapt to environmental stress.



Dandelion seeds are equipped to travel with down parachutes that help them fly far from the mother plant.

I believe it wants to be here! It's time to change our attitude about dandelions in the lawn: Dandelions add to the beauty of a landscape with their cheerful, sunny flowers!

Dandelions are well suited to their own proliferation. Flowers form at the top of the root long before the final frost of winter, giving them the protection of several inches of soil and ensuring a long blooming season. The seeds are a type of flying apparatus with radiating threads that form a sort of parachute. When wind sweeps across, the seeds are, in the words of David Attenborough in *The Private Life of Plants*, like a "fragile elegant globe. Even the gentlest breath, from the wind or a child, can cause squadrons to take off and sail high and far through the sky." Seeds have been found as far away as 5 miles from their mother plant. Also, the seeds do not have to go through a long period before germinating; thus they need less time to grow than do many other plants.

#### Cultivating Your Own



One hundred years ago, France produced seed catalogs that offered five varieties of dandelions. Given its versatility, it's not surprising that in many parts of the world, dandelion is cultivated and sold in the market-place. We in North America are just catching on. Today, dandelion seeds are commercially available from many seed catalogs. You can also collect seed

from the wild. To collect your own, cover the flowering plants with a piece of muslin to prevent the wind from carrying off the seeds. Collect the seeds in the evening, near sunset, when the dampness in the air causes the seed heads to close up. Store them in a cool, dry place in preparation for planting in late fall or early spring.

#### Sowing Seeds

It takes about 4 pounds of seed to grow one acre of the plant spaced at about 1 foot apart. This should yield enough seeds for four to five acres the second year, which will yield about 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of dandelion leaves.

#### Organic Alert

Dandelion is rarely attacked by disease or pests, making it a good candidate for organic gardening.

Broadcast seeds directly in the ground. From a fall sowing, you will be able to enjoy the greens in spring. Seeds can also be sown directly in the ground in early spring (and they're quite hardy, so no need to wait for the last frost). Space the seeds about 12 inches apart and cover them with about ½ inch of soil.

You can also start seed indoors. Sow the seeds in early spring on the surface of pots or divided plug trays. Cover with a fine layer of perlite. Avoid sowing in seed trays, as the long taproot will make it difficult to remove. Seeds germinate in three to six weeks. For container gardening, pots must be very deep to accommodate the long roots.

#### Root Division

Dandelion can also be propagated by root division. This method is best done in spring or fall where there is a cluster of dandelions. With a shovel, slice around the perimeter of a plant's root system and lift under the base of the plant, roots and all. By hand, divide the clumps of roots into smaller clumps and replant in another area. Water well.



## Growing Tips

Dandelion is great for people who doubt their ability to grow anything, as it is a tenacious plant. Put in some dandelions they'll boost your green thumb confidence. Following are a few tips for getting the most out of your crop.

The wild plant is considered more medicinal than cultivated varieties. The cultivated plants have larger leaves and roots, however, and produce more leaves. Some people like to blanch the leaves by placing a flowerpot upside down over the growing plant. This reduces their nutritional content, though, as a dark green color indicates the presence of chlorophyll and carotenoids.

Cultivated leaves tend to be thicker, more tender, and less bitter than those of the wild varieties, as well as lighter in color.

If you are growing dandelion for a salad green, pick off the buds and prevent flowering to keep the greens from becoming bitter.

To make a copper-rich garden fertilizer, pick three dandelion plants roots, leaves, stems, and flowers and place in a bucket with 1 quart (1 l) of boiling water. Let steep for ½ hour. Strain out and compost the spent plant material and use the liquid to water plants.

In late fall, dig up dandelion roots, plant them in wooden crates of soil, and store in the basement or another cool, dark area. If watered regularly, you'll have blanched leaves throughout the winter, though blanching reduces the bitterness and decreases nutrient content.

A trick for growing and harvesting your own dandelion roots is to plant the herbs on a narrow bed of loose soil to which some sawdust or wood chips have been added to make the soil more porous. Roots will then be easier to harvest.

## Harvesting Dandelions

It is likely that your neighbors will be delighted should you ask to collect dandelions from their lawns (providing their lawns haven't been sprayed). Be sure to gather from environmentally clean areas at least 50 feet away from busy roads and where no pesticides have been used. Roots will be easiest to harvest after a good rain or a few hours after the yard has been watered. If your neighbors don't live on a busy street and don't spray their lawns, ask permission to collect dandelions then bring them some dandelion muffins to show your gratitude.

Should you live where dandelions simply don't grow, such as in a high-rise apartment building, check your local supermarket, farmers' market, or health-food store. Nowadays many retail grocery stores carry dandelions in their produce departments.

*The dandelion is the greatest natural agent of decoration in our part of America. In some fields it is so abundant that there is no more than enough grass visible to give to it a setting. It is so thoroughly at home that we feel it to be the most prominent and persistent native American, whatever its origin. Coming as it does in the early spring, it clothes an entire landscape with its gorgeous color and rejoices the heart of man it is our tulip in the grass.*

WALLACE NUTTING,  
*CONNECTICUT BEAUTIFUL,*  
*PUBLISHED BY OLD AMERICA COMPANY,*  
1923

## Leaves

Dandelion leaves are best collected in the spring before the plants flower. People who claim to dislike the taste of the greens have very likely collected the leaves after a plant has flowered, when the greens have turned bitter. If you wash the leaves before drying, be sure to dry them well to discourage mold. Cut the leaves at their base with a knife or snap them off with your fingers. After the plant has seeded, there will be a new growth of leaves later in the summer and these also can be collected. Avoid leaves that are yellow and wilted.

### CASH CROP

Vineland, New Jersey, considers itself the Dandelion Capital of the World. The town grows close to half a million dollars' worth of this crop annually and holds a Dandelion Festival every year. Sales of fresh dandelion greens in the United States are estimated to be about \$3 million. Arizona, California, Florida, and Texas are other states known for growing dandelions on a commercial scale.

#### Stems

The stems are best when the plant is in bloom. Stems are not commonly used as a food, but the sap they contain can be applied to warts to help make them disappear!

#### Flowers

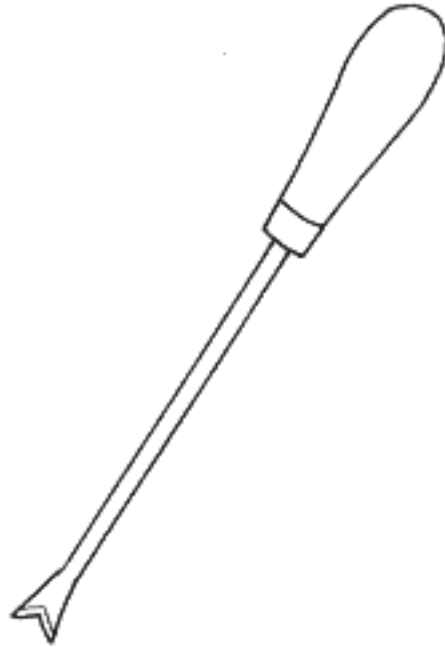
When collecting flowers, it is helpful to have small children with you they'll love to help. Spread the blossoms on a large cloth to allow some of the insects to crawl and fly away before you bring them inside. For appearance and efficacy, I recommend using the flowers the same day that they have been collected.



Once plucked, dandelion flowers will fade quickly,  
so use them within 24 hours.

## Roots

There is a wonderful tool called a dandelion digger (available at gardening supply shops) that you can use for digging the deep dandelion taproots. To obtain large roots, gather plants that are at least 2 years old. The best roots will be found in unmowed patches of land and in soil that is rich and loose. Here the root is likely to be single and juicy. (In poorer soil, the root tends to be forked and tough.) The plant is most effective in its fresh state. Roots from older plants will be leathery to eat, but can still be used for medicine and in teas.



A dandelion digger is good for digging out any plant with a deep taproot, including the dandelion.

The ideal times to collect roots are in early spring before the plant flowers and then again in fall after the first frost.

Spring-harvested roots are sweeter than those taken in the fall, as they are higher in fructose and less bitter and fibrous. But they must be collected before the flower buds are big, or all of their energy will go into producing the blossom this will deplete the root. From September to February is also an ideal time to collect the roots, when the plant is highest in inulin, which imparts a sweet taste. Spring roots are higher in taraxacin, which stimulates bile production, and fructose, a simple sugar, than fall roots.

Fall-harvested roots are more bitter and richer in inulin, which makes them more of a therapeutic medicine. This is partly because during the growing season, the fructose (also known as levulose) in the roots converts to inulin. The winter freeze then breaks down the inulin back to fructose, which sweetens the spring roots.

## Preserving Techniques

There are many methods of preserving dandelions so that their nutritional and therapeutic benefits can be enjoyed through the cold winter months until they are available as fresh plants the next spring. Preserving dandelions thus gives you the opportunity to use this valuable plant year-round as food or medicine.

### Drying Techniques

Drying herbs in an age-old technique that safely preserves the herb and creates an end product that is lightweight for carrying. Since drying evaporates the plant's water content, expect to have a lot less herb than what you started with.

#### *Leaves*

Rinse the leaves and blot dry. You can then place them in a food dehydrator or gather them in small bundles secured with a rubber band or string and hang them upside down in a dry, shady, well-ventilated location. Once crispy-dry, store the leaves in a glass jar in a cool, dark location. They should keep for one to two years.

#### *Roots*

Drying is the best method of preserving roots. To prepare the roots, scrub them well and slice the very largest roots lengthwise so that the insides will dry properly. Do not slice the roots before scrubbing, or the valuable milky juice will be washed away.

Once washed, place the roots on a screen and set in a cool, dry shady, well-ventilated area. They should dry within 3 to 14 days, depending on the size of the roots and the humidity of the air. Alternatively, you can quick-dry them in an oven: Preheat the oven to 120°F and set the roots directly on the racks. Keep the door of the oven slightly ajar. Once dried (about 4 to 12 hours,



Set the screen in a dry, shady, well-ventilated area to encourage the roots to dry.

depending on the size of your roots), store the roots in a glass jar in a cool, dry place. They will keep for about a year.

### Freezing

Collect greens (leaves) and wash them well. Steam them in a covered colander over a saucepan containing a few inches of boiling water for 1½ minutes. Then stop the cooking by plunging the greens into cold water. Put the greens into zip-seal bags, squeeze out the excess air, seal, and freeze. Frozen greens are suitable for use in recipes for cooked greens but should not be eaten raw.

### Getting Rid of Dandelions

The first crop of dandelions is a cheerful sign of spring. But perhaps your neighborhood association, unenlightened, is pressuring you to get rid of them. Share with a few neighbors some recipes and a copy of this book and start your own dandelion revolution! If this doesn't warm some hearts, remind people of the damage that herbicides cause to our planet. Spray programs are dangerous to animals and humans as well as to plants, and they poison our precious water supplies. Instead of chemicals, put some glitter in your yard the golden flowers of the delightful dandelion.

### Safe Alternatives to Herbicides

There are herbicides that have been developed for the sole purpose of killing dandelions. However, should you need to deter dandelions for some reason, instead of using toxic chemicals try mulching the area in which they grow with straw. Or apply black plastic to cover a weed-prone area this will kill the plants underneath. The heat generated will destroy most weed seeds, too, as well as insects and disease organisms. Then avoid turning the soil; you don't want to bring a new crop of seeds to the surface.

You could plant something that will choke out the dandelions, such as rye or clover. Better yet dig them up and use the roots for tea and food and make wine from the flowers! Dig up the plant when it is in flower, usually in April or May, before the seeds begin to form. At this point, the energy of the plant is aboveground and the food reserve in the root is less strong. If you leave a small piece of root in the ground, another dandelion will still come up. However, repeated diggings will eventually deplete the plant's food supply and cause it to lose its grip on life.

Tilling your dandelions under will only encourage more of them to grow. Instead, adjust the height of a lawnmower to 2½ to 3 inches (6.3 to 7.5 cm). The longer blades of grass will shade the dandelion leaves and stunt their growth. Or use a dandelion digger. This tool will make short work of removing dandelions you don't want.

Clipping the dandelion blossoms will discourage seeds from forming and thus decrease the plant's ability to spread. Use the harvested dandelion blossoms for food and medicine, of course.

#### A Final Plea

Isn't it time we learned to love and utilize the friendly dandelion? It offers itself freely, with something for everyone. Welcome this beautiful and useful plant. The people who tend to be the most aggressive about dandelions angry, wanting to kill and rip things out of the earth are probably the ones who could most benefit from this plant. Since you can't beat 'em, eat 'em and enjoy the numerous health benefits.

Celebrate life and enjoy dandelions!

### 3 Traditional Uses of Dandelion Medicine

Dandelions have served humanity for thousands of years. The Greek naturalist Theophrastus (c. 732287 B.C.) marveled at the dandelion's ability to flower over and over and recommended that the herb be taken as a tonic. In the Jewish tradition, dandelion leaves were one of the five bitter herbs of Passover mentioned in the Bible (Exodus). When Roman legions invaded Gaul and the Rhineland, they were delighted to find dandelions growing there. The Celts claimed dandelion as their own, relishing it to make food and wine. When Anglo-Saxon tribes settled in the British Isles after the withdrawal of the Romans, they used dandelion to prevent scurvy and as a diuretic and laxative.

#### Early Western Traditions

The Islamic physician Ibn sina \* (A.D. 9801037) prescribed dandelion root to stimulate bile production for those with liver problems. It was the Arab physicians of this time who first described dandelion's diuretic properties.

Herbalists in thirteenth-century Myddfai, a village in Wales, wrote about the health benefits of dandelion. In a European herbal



written in 1485 by Ortus Sannitatis, dandelion is mentioned as a medicinal plant. Nicholas Culpeper, an English herbalist of the seventeenth century, suggested dandelion for "every evil disposition of the body," which led to dandelion being considered "the official remedy for disorders." Culpeper also wrote of the dandelion: "You see here what virtues this common herb hath, and it is the reason the French and Dutch so often eat them in the spring; and now if you look a little farther, you may plainly see without a pair of spectacles, that foreign physicians are not so selfish as ours are, but communicative of the virtues of plants to people."

#### North American Uses

Though the dandelion is not native to North America, it is believed that the plants may have arrived here with the Vikings in A.D. 100. It's just as likely that they arrived with early settlers, hitchhikers in vegetable seed packets, in the nineteenth century. Passengers on the *Mayflower*, however, intentionally carried dandelions across the sea with them.

#### LOVE CHARM

An Iroquois woman would select a dandelion with a particularly long taproot that had a fork and a small appendage resembling a part of the male anatomy. Then the name of her intended beloved was spoken several times and the root thrown behind her to ensure that her love soon would follow. Also as a love charm, dandelion roots that were found growing entwined would be boiled in water. When the water cooled, it was splashed on the face to make the user sexually irresistible.

## Native Americans

The Native Americans welcomed this herb and gathered it for food and medicine. The Apaches collected it for days before their spring feasts. The Digger Indians of Colorado and the Papago of the Southwest ate dandelions both raw and cooked. The Iroquois boiled the leaves with fatty meats.

### Heartburn Remedy

Here's a common remedy from the Native American tradition for treating heart-burn: Boil a handful of flowers until the water turns yellow, leave it to steep overnight, and give first thing in the morning; continue treatment for one month.

Many Native American tribes also used dandelion medicinally. An example: The Mohegans drank a tea of dandelion leaf as a liver tonic. Kiowa women boiled dandelion flowers with penny-royal leaves to treat menstrual cramps. The Papago, too, used a tea of the flowers for menstrual cramps. The Navajo made a tea of the root for a new mother following birthing to hasten the delivery of the placenta. The Bella Coola of British Columbia and the Ojibwa both used dandelion root as a remedy for stomachache and heartburn. Delaware Indians used a dandelion root tea as a laxative and tonic. For the Mohegans and Potawatomi, the root was taken as a tonic tea. The Iroquois used dandelion to treat jaundice. The Fox Indians used a tea of the root to treat chest pains. The Tewa used a poultice of the leaves to help heal broken bones, bruises, swellings, sores, and fractures. Several tribes applied the juice from the stem to bee stings. The flowers also were used to make a yellow dye for deerskin.

Many tribes chewed various plants as a gum to moisten their mouths. Dandelion stems, because of their latex content, were used in this way. The young plant was regarded by many tribes as having mild narcotic properties, too.

### Early American Colonists

By the time the Puritans set sail for America, dandelion was considered an essential food and a health-giving plant. As European colonists settled along the Atlantic coast, they brought dandelion seeds with them to grow in their gardens. By 1630 dandelions were everywhere around the Plymouth Colony. Pioneer women actually raised dandelions to remind them of home, and fenced the precious plants to keep out gophers. As forests were cut down, dandelion seeds escaped to grow where room was now abundant.

Pioneer women considered dandelion an ally and never had a thought that they were a nuisance. During the Civil War, both North and South used it as food and medicine, especially when regular food supplies were cut off by blockades. They also substituted the roasted roots for coffee, and continued to do so even after the war. In the 1800s, settlers in the Midwest introduced the dandelion to provide food for bees, and dandelion's spread across the continent continued.

### TwentiethCentury Traditions

Dandelion was an official herb in the early *Pharmacopoeia* of the United States. The root was considered the significant part of the plant from 1831 to 1926 and was included in the *National Formulary* until 1965.

*Star-disked Dandelion just as we see them,  
Lying in the grass, like sparks  
that have leapt From kindling suns of fire.*  
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES,  
"DANDELION," *PROFESSOR AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE*

Dandelion is still included in the pharmacopoeias of Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Switzerland. Russians referred to dandelions as "the elixir of life," and it was a favorite remedy of the imperial court from the time of Peter the Great until the early 1900s. In rural Russia, dandelion root is still used to treat tuberculosis and prevent miscarriage.

During World Wars I and II, health departments in both the United States and

## DANDELION EUPHEMISMS

There is a French expression that translates to "eating dandelion by the roots," which means the same as the American expression "pushing up daisies": it implies that someone is dead.

Europe publicized this herb as a healthful food. Before World War I, dandelions were cultivated in Germany and the roots that were exported were as large as parsnips. By World War II, England had stopped growing many herbs, feeling it was cheaper to import them, yet when their supplies were cut off, the British Ministry of Health organized teams of women to collect dandelions. Honored for its war service, dandelion was given a place in the British *Pharmacopoeia*.

During World War II, when many people suffered nutritional deficiencies, Italian housewives in small villages would brew up a pot of dandelion soup and leave it on a windowsill as nourishment for those passersby who were poor. Dandelion flowers were also chopped and added to spreads to give the appearance of butter.

Throughout the twentieth century and in popular culture today, there have been many other uses devised for dandelion from a wide range of cultures for a vast range of purposes:

Lydia Pinkham, the great Quaker nurse, herbalist, and businesswoman of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, included dandelion root in the original recipe for her famous women's tonic.

The Eclectic physicians of the early 1900s, who combined herbal and modern medicine, regarded dandelion as beneficial for autointoxication (clearing toxins out of the body).

In Japan, dandelions are cultivated as an ornamental plant. The Japanese have produced two hundred colorful varieties in white, orange, copper, and black.

A popular Dutch legend says that if you eat dandelion salad on Mondays and Thursdays, you will be healthy always.

Dandelions have long been a favorite spring vegetable of the Mennonites and the Amish peoples.

The Pennsylvania Dutch have a custom of eating a bowl of dandelion greens on Green Thursday, in the belief that eating them on that day will ensure good health the rest of the year.

#### Dandelion in Chinese Medicine

Dandelion grows abundantly in China, especially in the Yangtze River valley, and records from the Tang dynasty date its use back to at least the seventh century. In China, a related species, *Taraxacum mongolicum*, which they call *pu-gong-ying*, is used to "clear heat" or treat infections or "fire poisons" as well as to clear dampness. The Chinese also call their dandelion *huang-hua ti-ting*, meaning "yellow-flowered herb," or *chian-nou-ts'ao*, meaning "plowing and hoeing weed."

#### Organizing on Its Behalf

Until the twentieth century, there existed a National Dandelion Society. Maybe it's time for a comeback. In the past decade, England has expressed concern over the possibility of the dandelion becoming extinct because of herbicide use, which has prompted the Save the Dandelion Society. See Sources for information on joining the North American version, Defenders of the Dandelion.

#### The Liver System

In traditional Chinese medicine, dandelion is often used to treat the Liver, which governs circulation of Blood and is important in maintaining a smooth flow of *chi*, or life energy, through the body. Dandelion tea made from the entire plant is used for any "hot" disorder that manifests in excess "heat" in the Liver.

According to Chinese medicine, the liver system is associated with anger and depression. As you begin to use dandelion, stored emotions that you thought you had forgotten may arise and become stirred up before leaving your body. On the other hand, dandelion root can be prescribed to clear stored, negative emotions.

#### The Herb for All Seasons

Dandelion is officially recognized in the *Pharmacopoeia* of the People's Republic of China, and practitioners of Chinese medicine have used dandelion to treat an incredible assortment of ailments and illnesses, including:

Abscesses, boils, carbuncles, and sores

Appendicitis

Breast problems such as cancer, lack of milk production, mastitis, and tumors

Chronic pelvic inflammatory disease

Colds, fevers, and pneumonia

Coughs and bronchitis

Dental problems

Eye inflammation

Food poisoning

Hemorrhoids

Hepatitis

Inflammation of the gums, mouth, and throat

Insect bites

Itchy skin

Jaundice

Mumps

Pancreatitis

Snakebites

Tonsillitis

Ulcers

## Ayurvedic Medicine

Ayurveda, translated as "life science," is the traditional system of healing in India and is now rapidly gaining popularity worldwide. It's based on mind-body-spirit connections that address specific body and energy types. In Ayurveda, dandelion is considered an herb that helps to purge *ama* (accumulated waste and toxins) from the body. It nurtures the air element (*vata*) and decreases fire (*pitta*) and water (*kapha*), and thus should be used with caution by those with extreme vata constitutions. As in Chinese medicine, dandelion is thought of as bitter, sweet, and cooling.

## Specific Uses

In Ayurvedic practice, dandelion is used for stagnation of energy in the liver and gallbladder and helps to cleanse bile ailments as well as breast problems such as tumors, insufficient milk production, cysts, and swollen lymph glands. Dandelion leaf is used most often for acute conditions and the root for chronic conditions, such as boils, carbuncles, gout, and cancer.

Ayurvedic medicine holds that dandelion is safe and beneficial for appetite loss and poor digestion, as it improves assimilation. It is also used for gynecological problems such as pelvic inflammatory disease and endometriosis. It is considered astringent, strengthening to the entire body, a cooling energy tonic, and beneficial in treating infection.

4

## Dandelion's Medicinal Properties

As a medicinal plant, *Taraxacum* is a self-contained pharmacy. It is one of the most widely used herbal medicines in the world. The systems primarily affected by dandelion are the liver, kidneys, gallbladder, pancreas, intestines, and blood. It is held in particularly high regard as one of the safest and most important herbs for the liver.

Dandelion root is most medicinal in the unroasted form and may be taken in a tea, in an extract, or in capsule form. Leaves are also commonly used as medicine and may be used fresh or dried in the form of tea, tincture, and capsules. Fresh stems provide the sap, which also has medicinal properties. The flowers are best used fresh and are used mainly as a food source.

## A Cure-All for What Ails You

Dandelion has been used to cure just about everything at some time and in some place. The leaves, with their mineral-rich properties, can be used for nourishing our bones (warding off osteoporosis) and our teeth. Drinking dandelion leaf tea over time helps to increase joint mobility and reduce stiffness; decrease



### Dandelions for Better Sight?

In the body, the betacarotene from dandelion greens is converted to 11-cis retinol, the most important constituent of rhodopsin, a protein in the retina's rods (the cells that enable us to see in low-light conditions).

serum cholesterol and uric acid; and promote digestive regularity. Drinking a tea of the roots following birthing aids in the expulsion of the placenta. In Germany, dandelion juice from the stem and root are used to improve eye health the plant is sometimes referred to as eye root. The Chinese use dandelion leaf internally to treat styes and conjunctivitis. Dandelions have long been used in cancer treatment; they are rich in chlorophyll and antioxidants like betacarotene and flavonoids.

### Giving Life to the Liver

Dandelion is a time-tested detoxifier and strengthener of the liver. In Germany, an over-the-counter drug called Hepatichol, which is made primarily from dandelion, is available for liver and gallbladder problems, including gallstones. Because the liver is the organ responsible for breaking down and clearing excess hormones from the body, one of the reasons that dandelion can improve menstrual problems is related to enhanced liver function.

Dandelion root is rich in phytosterols, so it is also excellent to use during menopause to alleviate hot flashes. It helps the liver break down excess luteinizing hormones and follicle-stimulating hormones. A woman going through menopause and using hormone replacement therapy can take dandelion to help nourish, protect, and support the liver while taking drugs.

Like other herbs that have an effect on the liver, dandelion helps to relieve anger, depression, jealousy, oversensitivity, and resentment. So think of this plant as both physically and emotionally beneficial: so much healing power with no harmful side effects!

## Clinical Trials and Scientific Findings

Clinical studies to introduce a new drug often cost over 300 million dollars and are thus only affordable to large pharmaceutical companies, who hope to regain their expenditure when the new drug is released for sale. Understandably, then, there haven't been many studies on the medicinal value of an herb that grows so wild and free and is almost always readily available. However, dandelion has been used by millions of people for thousands of years! And over the past 100 years, the studies that have been conducted have served to confirm dandelion's beneficial properties.

Dandelion is known for its effects on the liver. This is due primarily to its ability to increase bile production by causing the gallbladder to contract, releasing stored bile and its high choline content, which acts as a tonic for the liver. As author and herbalist Christopher Hobbs reports, in a 1938 Italian study 12 subjects suffering liver dysfunction symptoms such as jaundice and low energy were injected with 5 milliliters of dandelion extract daily for 20 days. Cholesterol and urinary bilirubin were measured before and after administering the dandelion. Although the standards for testing are much more vigorous in modern times, 11 of the 12 subjects enjoyed a significant lowering of cholesterol levels and all 12 reported feeling better.

According to K. Faber, author of "The Dandelion," clinical trials in China from the mid-1900s proved dandelion to be effective against bronchitis, pneumonia, tonsillitis, and other respiratory disorders.

In a 1950 study conducted by L. Krroeber in England, dandelion was a successful remedy for hepatitis, jaundice, and liver enlargement, all common symptoms of liver dysfunction.

Dandelion has a long tradition of being a weight-loss herb for humans, which prompted researchers to study these claims on animals. In 1974, in a Romanian study by Elizabeth Racz-Kotilla, Gabriel Racz, and A. Solomon, rats and mice were given

50 milliliters of a dandelion infusion per every kilogram of body weight for one month. During this period they lost as much as 30 percent of their original weight. The loss was due to the diuretic activity of dandelion, the mild laxative effect, and the enhancing of liver function. It is also assumed that part of dandelion's weight lossenhancing effect comes from its gland-stimulating qualities.

According to a 1979 study from Japan by K.K. Kotobuki Seiyaku, when the polysaccharide and aqueous extracts of dandelion have been administered to animals, they exhibit antitumor activity.

In *Chinese Materia Medica*, Dan Bensky, Andrew Gamble, and Ted Kaptchuk detail studies in China that indicate that dandelion has in vitro antibacterial effects against *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Shigella* species, *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*, and *Neisseria meningitidis*.

Dandelion and its constituent inulin have shown positive hypoglycemic activity helping to stabilize blood sugar levels in animals. Inulin is composed of chains of fructose, which may possibly act to buffer the blood's levels of glucose and prevent sudden fluctuations.

Why Aren't There More Studies?

Why isn't more research conducted to prove the efficacy of this time-tested plant used by many world cultures? Well, as stated earlier, it's extremely expensive to introduce a new drug onto the market, and because dandelion proliferates just about everywhere, there's not much profit to be found in studying the plant for its possible uses as a drug. You can't patent a dandelion. Who would benefit if everyone could gather his or her own medicines? Certainly not the drug companies. Only the people and perhaps the planet as we stop spraying to eradicate this useful medicinal plant.

## MEDICINAL PROPERTIES OF DANDELION

It would be difficult to think of a plant exhibiting more medicinal properties than does the dandelion. Here are some of its amazing effects.

PLANT PART	PROPERTY	ACTION/EVIDENCE
Root, leaf	Alterative	Help to purify the blood by increasing blood flow to the tissues, aiding assimilation and stimulating metabolism.
Root	Antibilious	Helps to remove excess bile from the system.
Root	Anti-inflammatory	Reduces inflammation, such as glandular swelling.
Leaf, sap, flower	Anodyne	Lessen nerve excitability, thus relieving pain.
Leaf	Antacid	Relieves stomach acid.
Root	Antibacterial	Inhibits the growth of germs.
Root, sap	Antifungal	Inhibit fungal growth.
Leaf	Antilithic	Helps to prevent and discharge urinary and biliary stones and gravel.
Leaf	Antioxidant	High in beta-carotene and vitamin C; helps the body resist free-radical damage.
Leaf, root	Antirheumatic	Root helps to disperse acidic deposits in the joints; leaves help gout and rheumatism as well as glandular swellings.
Leaf, root	Antitumor	Although there is not much data, dandelion has traditionally been used as a poultice to reduce tumors; in traditional Chinese medicine, dandelion poultices are used to treat breast cancer.
Leaf, root	Aperient	Work as a mild laxative.
Leaf, root	Astringent	Tighten and tone tissue. Help dry excessive secretions.
Leaf, root	Bitter	Stimulate the initial stages of digestion, including increasing saliva production and gastric juice activity as well as bile release.
Flower	Calmative	Mildly tranquilizing.
Flower	Cardiotonic	Benefits the heart.
Root	Cholagogue	Causes the gallbladder to contract and release stored bile from the liver. Can be used in cases of congestion of the liver and gallbladder.
Root	Choleretic	Stimulates bile production and increases cleansing of the bile duct.

*(continued on next page)*

## MEDICINAL PROPERTIES OF DANDELION (continued)

PLANT PART	PROPERTY	ACTION/EVIDENCE
Leaf	Decongestant	Helps open respiratory passages and improve breathing.
Root	Deobstruent	Used to move obstructions, especially those originating in the liver.
Leaf, root	Depurative	Help to cleanse and purify the body.
Root, sap	Discutient	Help to dissolve abnormal growths.
Leaf, root	Digestive	Increase hydrochloric acid levels in the stomach. All the glands in the digestive system respond quickly to dandelion.
Leaf, root	Diuretic	Stimulate the flow of urine, so help reduce fluid retention. Helpful in cases of fluid retention due to heart problems.
Flower	Emollient	Used externally to soothe, soften, and protect the skin.
Leaf	Febrifuge	Helps lower fever.
Leaf, root	Galactagogue	Increase mother's milk.
Root, flower	Hepatic	Strengthen and tonify the liver.
Root	Hypnotic	Induces a deep, healing sleep state.
Leaf, root	Immune stimulant	Can be used for acute infections such as tonsillitis and pelvic inflammatory disease.
Root	Lipotropic	Prevents the accumulation of fat in the liver by stimulating bile production.
Root, leaf	Lithotriptic	Help to dissolve and discharge urinary and gallbladder stones.
Leaf	Laxative	Increases bowel function.
Leaf	Narcotic (mild)	Helps to relieve pain and induce sleep.
Leaf	Nutritive	Supplies lots of nutrients; builds and tones the body.
Root	Purgative	Increases bile secretions that activate intestinal peristalsis.
Root, leaf	Restorative	Help in the renewal and repair of organs and can help prevent further destruction. Also restorative to connective tissue.
Root	Sedative	Quiets the nerves.
Leaf, root	Stomachic	Strengthen and tonify the stomach. Improve digestion and relieve gas.
Leaf, root	Tonic	Promote general health and well-being.
Leaf, flower	Vulnerary	Encourage wound healing by promoting cellular growth and repair.

### Contraindications and Cautions

For most people, dandelion is considered safe even in large amounts; however, as with anything else, there is always the possibility that you could be allergic to it. There are no reports of toxic effects from its internal or external use. Even pregnant women use dandelion leaves, to prevent edema and hypertension. There have been very few cases reported of abdominal discomfort, loose stools, nausea, and heartburn associated with dandelion.

#### Caution

Avoid using dandelions from lawns that have been sprayed with herbicides or chemical fertilizers in the past two or even three years.

Kommission E, a German panel of experts on drugs and medical devices, allows dandelion leaf and root for their diuretic effects, as a cholagogue and appetite stimulant, and for dyspepsia, and they are an approved over-the-counter-drug. The German Kommission E feels dandelion to be contraindicated for obstruction of the bile duct, and suggests that it be used for gallstones only after consulting with a physician. In the United States, dandelion is considered *GRAS* (Generally Regarded as Safe); in the United Kingdom, dandelion is on the General Sales list; in Canada it is approved as an over-the-counter-drug; and in France it is classified as a Traditional Medicine.

The fresh latex in the stems can cause contact dermatitis in some sensitive individuals. Consult with a physician prior to using dandelion if you suffer from an obstructed bile duct or gallstones. Some individuals with gastric hyperacidity may find excessive use of dandelion leaf aggravating. To modify some of the cooling and contracting effects of dandelion when it is used over a long period, mix it with a small amount of ginger and licorice root. Truly, the chemicals used to poison this magnificent plant are far more dangerous than this herb ever could be!

### Cautions for Children

Children delight in weaving crowns of the golden blossoms and blowing the fluffy seed heads. However, dandelion flowers wilt quickly once picked and do not make a good bouquet. If you place them in water, the flowers close up tightly. Children have become nauseous from sucking or eating too many dandelion flowers. Occasionally a child assimilates the diuretic properties through the skin from overhandling the fresh plant and thus may need to urinate more. Simply give the child a tea of peppermint, fennel seed, and chamomile, and he or she will begin to feel better.

### Benefits for Specific Ailments and Conditions

Dandelion is often regarded as a blood purifier, which aids in the process of filtering and straining wastes from the bloodstream. It is useful in treating obstructions of the gallbladder, liver, pancreas, and spleen. The vulnerary, tonic, astringent, and antimicrobial properties of dandelion also make it helpful in the treatment of prostate problems. The leaves aid in the elimination of uric acid. Use the root primarily for problems related to the liver, spleen, stomach, and kidneys and the leaf for liver, kidney, and bladder concerns. Dandelion helps hypertension by decreasing excessive fluids in the body that the heart must pump.

### During Pregnancy

When dandelion leaves are ingested during pregnancy, they strengthen the liver and can help prevent preeclampsia, which manifests as high blood pressure with edema. It helps the fetus to develop a strong liver of its own. Being high in iron, the leaves can help prevent anemia, a common concern for pregnant mothers.

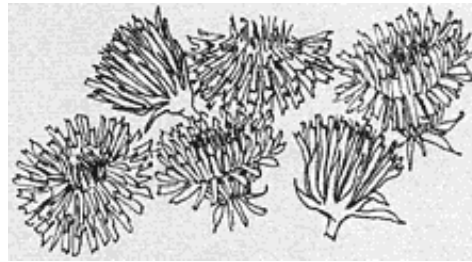
High blood pressure and fluid retention during pregnancy can both be safely treated with dandelion leaf tea (and improvement in diet).

For Children

Taking dandelion root in the last few weeks of pregnancy will help prevent pathological jaundice in the baby. Should the baby have jaundice, the root taken as a tea ideally can be drunk by the nursing mother, or given to the infant directly as the next-best choice. About 1 teaspoon (5 ml) of the tea daily is appropriate for a baby, but the mother can drink as much as she is able. As dandelion leaf is a galactagogue, it increases the nursing mother's milk supply and bolsters its nutritional quality another boon for the infant! The leaves and root of dandelion make an excellent food or tea rich in minerals for growing children. Because dandelion leaves and roots help to cleanse the liver, kidneys, and therefore the blood, they are excellent for teenagers concerned about acne.

#### FOR SIMPLE DELIGHT

For recreation, children's favorite pastime is to make chains of dandelions as necklaces, bracelets, and crowns. They also often strip the stems of flowers and leaves, split the stems at top and bottom, and then drop them in water to watch them curl and twist into pretty shapes.





## AILMENTS EASED BY DANDELION REMEDIES

The following ailments can be helped by using dandelion in the form of a tea, tincture, capsule, or tablet. A general therapeutic dose is one cup of tea, one dropperful of tincture, or two 500-mg capsules or tablets three times daily. Please, in cases of serious illness, consult your health-care provider!

AILMENT	PLANT PART	AILMENT	PLANT PART
Abscess	root	Debility	fresh greens
Acne	root	Depression	root, flower
Age spots	root	Diabetes	root, leaf, stem
Alcoholism	root	Dizziness	root
Allergies	leaf, root	Dropsy	leaf
Amenorrhea	leaf	Dyspepsia	root, leaf
Anemia	leaf, root	Eczema	root, stem
Anorexia	leaf, root	Edema	leaf
Appetite loss	leaf	Endometriosis	root, leaf
Arthritis	root	Fatigue	leaf, root
Backache	flower, leaf	Flatulence	leaf, root
Bedwetting	leaf, taken earlier in the day	Gallbladder inflammation	leaf, stem
Boils	root	Gout	root helps to neutralize uric acid in the bloodstream
Breast tenderness, cysts, and breast cancer	root, leaf	Hangover	leaf, root
Bronchitis	leaf, root	Hayfever	root
Cancer prevention	leaf, root	Headache	root, flower
Candida	leaf, root	Heartburn	root
Cellulite	leaf, root	Hemorrhoids	root
Chickenpox	root	Hepatitis	root
Cirrhosis	root	Herpes	root
Cholesterol, high	root, leaf	Hypertension	root, leaf
Colitis	leaf, root	Hypochondria	leaf, root
Computer stress	leaf, root	Hypoglycemia	root
Congestive heart failure	leaf, root	Insomnia	leaf
Constipation	root	Jaundice	root

*(table continued on next page)*

## AILMENTS EASED BY DANDELION REMEDIES (continued)

AILMENT	PLANT PART	AILMENT	PLANT PART
Liver and gallbladder obstruction	root, stem	Prostatitis	leaf, root
		Psoriasis	root
Mastitis	leaf, root	Rashes	root, stem
Measles	root	Scrofula	leaf
Menstrual cramps	flower, root	Scurvy	leaf
Mononucleosis	leaf, root	Sinusitis	leaf
Morning sickness	root	Spleen enlargement	leaf, root
Mumps	root	Stomachache	leaf
Muscular rheumatism	leaf	Tonsillitis	leaf, root
Nervousness	leaf	Tuberculosis	root
Night blindness	flower	Tumor	root
Obesity	leaf, root	Ulcer	leaf, root
Osteoarthritis	root	Urinary tract infection	leaf
Ovarian cysts	root	Uterine fibroids	leaf, root
Poison oak and ivy	leaf, root	Varicose veins	root
Premenstrual syndrome	root	Venereal warts	root
Premenstrual water retention	leaf		

## 5 Making and Using Dandelion Medicines

There are many benefits to dandelion medicine. It's safe, effective, abundant, fresh, and free! It's pleasant to use and has a safety record that spans thousands of years of use. Medicinally, dandelions can be used fresh or prepared as a tea, tincture, encapsulated powder, juice, or homeopathic formula. Most dandelion remedies are easy to make at home, and in most regions, the fresh flowers are easy to collect even, in fact, difficult to avoid tripping over. However, if you have neither the time nor the inclination, you can usually purchase harvested plants, dried leaves and roots, or remedies from health-food stores, herb shops, or mail-order sources (see Sources).

### Tea Preparations

One of the greatest pleasures is a peaceful, reflective moment spent with a cup of tea. Taking the time to sit quietly over a cup of herbal tea, alone or with loved ones, is psychologically destressing, relaxing, and life-affirming; in addition, herbal tea is itself extremely healthful and can be healing as well. Think "I'm nourishing myself with the strength of this herb" as you savor any

one of the following recipes. Beginning on page 46 are a number of healthful herbal formulas that utilize the benefits of dandelion. For medicinal purposes, drink three or four cups daily.

#### Making Infusions

To make a tea from the leaves of plants, there are two methods you can choose from. The glass-jar method takes longer but produces a stronger tea. The French-press method is quicker but not as strong. In both cases, use ½ ounce of dried leaves or 1 ounce of fresh leaves per cup of water. After straining, compost the spent leaves.



The glass-jar method takes time  
but makes a potent tea.

#### *Glass-Jar Method*

Place the tea ingredients in a glass canning jar. Cover with freshly boiled water. Put on the lid and allow to steep overnight, then strain out the solids.

#### *French-Press Method*

Simply place the herbs in a French press and cover with 1 quart of boiling water. Allow to steep for at least 20 minutes. (If you don't own a French press, first steep the herbs, then strain the tea through a non-aluminum strainer.)

#### THE DANDELION "CURE"

In Europe, many people commonly follow "the cure," which entails drinking three cups of dandelion root tea daily for six to eight weeks. They may do this twice a year, spring and autumn. Another spring cure is to take 1 or 2 tablespoons of dandelion leaf juice in some water morning and night for several weeks. In the fall a bit of juniper juice is also used when treating arthritic conditions. Consuming dandelion in the spring helps to counter the ill effects of a winter of eating only cooked, heavy foods. Drink dandelion leaf and root tea when on a cleansing diet or fasting.



















































































































































































































