



A Dandy Herb

A hardy, cheery perennial, the dandelion arrives in early spring, thriving in wet or dry, shady or sunny locations (though it basks in the sun). You'll find it gracing pastures, wastelands, and, of course, lawns. While its official Latin name is *Taraxacum officinale*—meaning “official remedy for disorders”—it also goes by Irish daisy, monk's head, telltime, blowball, wild endive, and lion's teeth (likely in reference to its long, deeply toothed leaves).

The dandelion's hollow stalk supports a jaunty yellow flower that transforms—when no one's looking, it seems—into a downy white seedhead, each containing its own tiny parachute to carry it into the wind for dispersal. (Make a wish before you blow!)

Despite its nasty reputation among lawn lovers, the dandelion is a hard working herb. It attracts ladybugs (and so decreases pesty aphids), aerates the soil, and provides early spring pollen. (In

fact, dandelions were introduced to the Midwest in order to provide food for honeybees in the early spring.) The dandelion is nutrient rich and has been used medicinally for centuries. And it has cosmetic uses to boot. From its taproot to its blossom, the dandelion is a valuable herb.



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Dandelion

Recipes for ...

- » Dandelion Facial Mask
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Q&A

What nutrients does dandelion offer?

Dandelions are loaded with nourishment! In fact, according to the USDA, dandelions are among the top four green vegetables in nutritional value. The plant is an excellent source of vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin K, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin B6, calcium, iron, potassium, and manganese. And they're a good source of folate, magnesium, phosphorus and copper. Little wonder the early American settlers toted dandelions along to the New World!

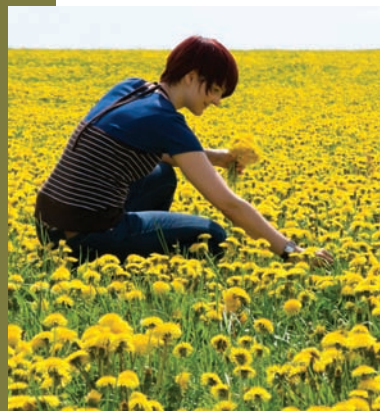


Can I eat the dandelions in my yard?

Sure, with a few caveats. You'll want to harvest dandelions from areas that aren't visited by pets and that haven't been sprayed with pesticides (you'll know this

about your own yard, but don't assume roadsides or neighbor's lawns are chemical free if you're inclined to roam). For the best taste, harvest the fresh leaves just as they emerge in the spring. (Fall is another good time, because the bitterness dissipates after frost.) Wash the herb well to remove any white sap (which is bitter). While

you can pick leaves and roots any time of the day, dandelion flowers are best harvested mid-morning, after the dew has evaporated.



To learn more about dandelion, visit www.frontiercoop.com

What is a weed?

A plant whose virtues have never been discovered.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Culinary Dandelion

There are so many fun and delicious ways to use every part of the dandelion plant! For example:

- ✿ Include the fresh greens in salads or sandwiches, frittatas or omelets, pasta or grain dishes. Sauté them in olive oil with mushrooms and onions or add them to soups and stews. (They partner well with other greens like kale and baby lettuces.)
- ✿ Create the perfect tonic tea. Use about 1 tablespoon of dried dandelion leaves per cup of water. Sweeten with honey, if you like.
- ✿ Add the flowers to salads, or use them to make jelly, beer or wine. Steam them with other vegetables, or pickle them. (When preparing the flowers, avoid the green sepals at the base, which are bitter; stick with the yellow parts of the flower).
- ✿ Fried dandelion blossoms are an easy-to-prepare delicacy: Simply dip each dandelion flower into a batter of egg and milk, then into a mixture of flour, salt, black pepper (and a favorite spice or two, if you like). Deep fry in hot oil until golden brown, then drain on paper towels.
- ✿ Even the root (which can grow to ten inches) can be eaten—as a cooked vegetable in soups, for example. Or it can be roasted to make a rich, hot drink: Cut the root into small pieces, then roast in a pan until it's dark and aromatic. Add about a teaspoon of the root to one cup of water and simmer for about 10 minutes. For a chai-type beverage, add spices like cloves, cardamom, star anise, and licorice root. Strain and serve with milk or cream and honey.
- ✿ If you have some unripe fruit in the kitchen, simply place it in a paper bag with a few dandelion leaves and flowers. The dandelion will release ethylene gas that will help ripen the fruit.



Cosmetic Dandelion

Dandelions are as useful externally as they are internally. Equally appropriate for dry or oily skin or hair, the herb is good at re-establishing equilibrium.

- ✿ To make a dandelion facial mask, simply combine fresh, mashed dandelion leaves with egg white or yogurt. Or make a decoction (strong tea) of dandelion leaves and add it to the egg white or yogurt. (The decoction will make a runnier mask, but that's okay.) Spread on clean face and lie down for 15 minutes. Rinse off and pat dry.
- ✿ Treat yourself to a dandelion facial steam. Add a handful of dandelion flowers to a large bowl. Pour boiling water over the flowers. Lean over the bowl and, using a towel, form a tent over your head and the bowl. Steam for about 10 minutes. Rinse with warm then cool water and pat your face dry.
- ✿ Add dandelion leaves and/or flowers to your bath; use a muslin bag or cheesecloth for easy removal. (Or simply add a strong dandelion tea to your bathwater.)
- ✿ A dandelion herbal hair rinse is especially nice for light-colored hair. Combine 1 cup of dandelion flowers, 1 cup of chamomile flowers, and ½ cup lemon balm in a pot. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Simmer for about 20 minutes, then cover and remove from heat. Let sit for about half an hour, then strain and cool. Use as a final rinse.

