



Plants For A Future

*Edible, medicinal and useful plants
for a healthier world*

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Database Name:

Taraxacum officinale - Weber.

Keyword:

Dandelion

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Author	Weber.	Botanical references	17, 200
Family	Compositae	Genus	Taraxacum
Synonyms	<i>Taraxacum vulgare</i> - Schrank.		
Known Hazards	 <p>This plant has been mentioned in various books on poisonous plants but any possible toxins will be of very low concentration and toxicity[10]. There are reports that some people have suffered dermatitis as a result of touching the plant, this is probably caused by the latex in the leaves and stems [222].</p>		
Range	Throughout most of the northern hemisphere, including Britain.		
Habitat	A very common weed of grassland and cultivated ground [17].		
Edibility Rating	 4 (1-5)	Medicinal Rating	 3 (1-5)

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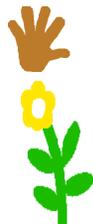
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Physical Characteristics



Perennial growing to 0.45m by 0.3m.

It is hardy to zone 5 and is not frost tender. It is in flower from April to May, and the seeds ripen from May to June. The flowers are hermaphrodite (have both male and female organs) and are pollinated by Insects, Apomictic (reproduce by seeds formed without sexual fusion). The plant is self-fertile. It is noted for attracting wildlife.

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The plant prefers light (sandy), medium (loamy) and heavy (clay) soils and requires well-drained soil. The plant prefers acid, neutral and basic (alkaline) soils and can grow in very alkaline soil. It can grow in semi-shade (light woodland) or no shade. It requires moist soil. The plant can tolerate maritime exposure.

Habitats

Lawn; Meadow; Cultivated Beds;

Cultivars: (as above except)
 'Broad Leaved' not Lawn;

Edible Uses

Edible Parts: [Flowers](#); [Leaves](#); [Root](#).

Edible Uses: [Coffee](#); [Tea](#).

Leaves - raw or cooked[1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 14, 33, 154]. When used in salads, they are rather bitter, though less so in the winter. Tender young leaves are considerably less bitter than older leaves[K]. The leaves are often blanched (by excluding light from the growing plant) before use[183]. This will make them less bitter, but they will also contain less vitamins and minerals[K]. A very nutritious food, 100g of the raw leaves contain about 2.7g. protein, 9.2g. carbohydrate, 187mg Calcium, 66mg phosphorus, 3.1mg iron, 76mg sodium, 397mg potassium, 36mg magnesium, 14000iu vitamin A, 0.19mg vitamin B1, 0.26mg vitamin B2, 35mg vitamin C[173]. Root - raw or cooked[5, 9, 12, 183]. Bitter. A turnip-like flavour[159]. Flowers - raw or cooked[102, 159]. A rather bitter flavour[K], the unopened flower buds can be used in fritters[183] and they can also be preserved in vinegar and used like capers[7]. Both the leaves and the roots are used to flavour herbal beers and soft drinks such as 'Dandelion and Burdock'[238]. The roots of 2 year old plants are harvested in the autumn, dried and roasted to make a very good coffee substitute[2, 4, 5, 12, 54, 159]. It is caffeine-free[213]. A pleasant tea is made from the flowers[12, 102]. They are also used to make wine - all green parts should be removed when making wine to prevent a bitter flavour[238]. The leaves and the roots can also be used to make tea.

Medicinal Uses

[Aperient](#); [Cholagogue](#); [Depurative](#); [Diuretic](#); [Hepatic](#); [Laxative](#); [Stomachic](#); [Tonic](#); [Warts](#).

The dandelion is a commonly used herbal remedy. It is especially effective and valuable as a diuretic because it contains high levels of potassium salts and therefore can replace the potassium that is lost from the body when diuretics are used[238]. All parts of the plant, but especially the root, are slightly aperient, cholagogue, depurative, strongly diuretic, hepatic, laxative, stomachic and tonic[4, 7, 9, 21,

54, 165, 176, 222, 238]. The root is also experimentally cholagogue, hypoglycaemic and a weak antibiotic against yeast infections[222]. The dried root has a weaker action[222]. The roots can be used fresh or dried and should be harvested in the autumn when 2 years old[4]. The leaves are harvested in the spring when the plant is in flower and can be dried for later use[9]. A tea can be made from the leaves or, more commonly, from the roots[213]. The plant is used internally in the treatment of gall bladder and urinary disorders, gallstones, jaundice, cirrhosis, dyspepsia with constipation, oedema associated with high blood pressure and heart weakness, chronic joint and skin complaints, gout, eczema and acne[238]. The plant has an antibacterial action, inhibiting the growth of Staphylococcus aureus, Pneumococci, Meningococci, Bacillus dysenteriae, B. typhi, C. diphtheriae, Proteus etc[176]. The latex contained in the plant sap can be used to remove corns, warts and verrucae[7]. The latex has a specific action on inflammations of the gall bladder and is also believed to remove stones in the liver[7]. A tea made from the leaves is laxative[222].

Other Uses

[Compost](#); [Cosmetic](#); [Dye](#); [Fruit ripening](#); [Latex](#); [Miscellany](#).

The flowers are an ingredient of 'QR' herbal compost activator[32]. This is a dried and powdered mixture of several herbs that can be added to a compost heap in order to speed up bacterial activity and thus shorten the time needed to make the compost[K]. A liquid plant feed can be made from the root and leaves[54]. A low quality latex, which can be used for making rubber, can be obtained from the roots of this plant. A magenta-brown dye is obtained from the root[141]. The plant releases ethylene gas, this stunts the growth of nearby plants and causes premature ripening of fruits[14, 18]. A distilled water made from the ligules (thin appendages at the base of the leaf blades) is used cosmetically to clear the skin and is particularly effective in fading freckles[7].

Scented Plants

Flowers: Fresh

The flowers have an unpleasant odour[245].

Cultivation details

A very easily grown plant, it succeeds in most soils[1], though it prefers a well-drained humus-rich neutral to alkaline soil in full sun or light shade[37, 238]. A very hardy plant, tolerating temperatures down to at least -29°C[238]. The dandelion is a common weed of lawns and grassy places. Though it has a bitter flavour, the plant is often cultivated as a salad crop and as a medicinal plant, especially in parts of Europe. There are some named varieties with larger, more tender and less bitter leaves[183]. Dandelions can provide edible

leaves all year round, especially if they are given a small amount of protection in the winter[K]. A valuable bee plant and an important food plant for the caterpillars of many butterfly and moth species[4, 24, 30, 54], it grows well in a spring meadow[24]. A deep rooting plant, it has roots up to 1 metre long and brings up nutrients from lower levels of the soil[201]. An excellent plant to grow in lawns, if the lawn is cut no more than fortnightly then the dandelions will provide a good quantity of edible leaves[K]. Grows well with alfalfa [18, 201]. Another report says that it inhibits the growth of nearby plants[54]. This is probably a reference to the fact that the plant gives off ethylene gas, this gas is a hormone that promotes the premature ripening of fruits and also induces the premature fruiting of plants, thereby stunting their growth[14, 18]. *T. officinale* is not a valid name for this species, but no valid name has as yet been ascribed to it[200]. This is actually an aggregate species of many hundreds of slightly differing species. Most seed production is apomictic which means that plants produce seed non-sexually and all seedlings are clones of the parent, thus small differences are maintained.

Propagation

Seed - sow spring in a cold frame and either surface-sow or only just cover the seed. Make sure the compost does not dry out. Germination should take place within 2 weeks, though 2 weeks cold stratification may improve germination. Prick out the seedlings into individual pots when they are large enough to handle, choosing relatively deep pots to accommodate the tap root. Plant them out in early summer. Division in early spring as the plant comes into growth.

Cultivars

'Amélioré à Coeur Plein'

A very distinct cultivar, surpassing the wild plant not so much in size as in the very great number of leaves, which form a regular tuft of clump, instead of a plain rosette[183]. It yields a very abundant crop without taking up much ground, and blanches very easily, and indeed, almost naturally[183].

'Broad Leaved'

The plant has large broad dark green leaves, more deeply lobed along the axis of the leaf than the wild form. The leaves are thick and tender[183]. Plants are semi-erect in habit, and the leaves are easily blanched. In rich soils they can be 60cm wide [183]. Plants do not go to seed as quickly as French types[183].

'Vert de Montmagny'

This form has large long dark green leaves, well lobed and denticulated[183]. They may be blanched or not[183]. Vigorous and productive plants, they are best sown in early spring or autumn[183].

Links

This plant is also mentioned in the following PFAF articles: [The Edible Lawn](#), [Winter Salads](#), [Alternative Edible Leaves](#), [The Potted Garden](#).

References

[K] Ken Fern

Notes from observations, tasting etc at Plants For A Future and on field trips.

[1] **F. Chittendon.** *RHS Dictionary of Plants plus Supplement.* 1956 Oxford University Press 1951

Comprehensive listing of species and how to grow them. Somewhat outdated, it has been replaced in 1992 by a new dictionary (see [200]).

[2] **Hedrick. U. P.** *Sturtevant's Edible Plants of the World.* Dover Publications 1972 ISBN 0-486-20459-6

Lots of entries, quite a lot of information in most entries and references.

[4] **Grieve.** *A Modern Herbal.* Penguin 1984 ISBN 0-14-046-440-9

Not so modern (1930's?) but lots of information, mainly temperate plants.

[5] **Mabey. R.** *Food for Free.* Collins 1974 ISBN 0-00-219060-5

Edible wild plants found in Britain. Fairly comprehensive, very few pictures and rather optimistic on the desirability of some of the plants.

[7] **Chiej. R.** *Encyclopaedia of Medicinal Plants.* MacDonald 1984 ISBN 0-356-10541-5

Covers plants growing in Europe. Also gives other interesting information on the plants. Good photographs.

[9] **Launert. E.** *Edible and Medicinal Plants.* Hamlyn 1981 ISBN 0-600-37216-2

Covers plants in Europe. a drawing of each plant, quite a bit of interesting information.

[10] **Altmann. H.** *Poisonous Plants and Animals.* Chatto and Windus 1980 ISBN 0-7011-2526-8

A small book, reasonable but not very detailed.

[12] **Loewenfeld. C. and Back. P.** *Britain's Wild Larder.* David and Charles 0 ISBN 0-7153-7971-2

A handy pocket guide.

[14] **Holtom. J. and Hylton. W.** *Complete Guide to Herbs.* Rodale Press 1979 ISBN 0-87857-262-7

A good herbal.

[17] **Clapham, Tootin and Warburg.** *Flora of the British Isles.* Cambridge University Press 1962

A very comprehensive flora, the standard reference book but it has

no pictures.

[18] **Philbrick H. and Gregg R. B.** *Companion Plants*. Watkins 1979
Details of beneficial and antagonistic relationships between
neighbouring plants.

[21] **Lust. J.** *The Herb Book*. Bantam books 1983 ISBN 0-553-23827-
2

Lots of information tightly crammed into a fairly small book.

[24] **Baines. C.** *Making a Wildlife Garden*. 0

Fairly good with lots of ideas about creating wildlife areas in the
garden.

[30] **Carter D.** *Butterflies and Moths in Britain and Europe*. Pan 1982
ISBN 0-330-26642-x

An excellent book on Lepidoptera, it also lists their favourite food
plants.

[32] **Bruce. M. E.** *Commonsense Compost Making*. Faber 1977 ISBN
0-571-09990-4

Excellent little booklet dealing with how to make compost by using
herbs to activate the heap. Gives full details of the herbs that are
used.

[33] **Organ. J.** *Rare Vegetables for Garden and Table*. Faber 1960

Unusual vegetables that can be grown outdoors in Britain. A good
guide.

[37] **Thompson. B.** *The Gardener's Assistant*. Blackie and Son. 1878

Excellent general but extensive guide to gardening practices in the
19th century. A very good section on fruits and vegetables with many
little known species.

[54] **Hatfield. A. W.** *How to Enjoy your Weeds*. Frederick Muller Ltd
1977 ISBN 0-584-10141-4

Interesting reading.

[102] **Kavasch. B.** *Native Harvests*. Vintage Books 1979 ISBN 0-394-
72811-4

Another guide to the wild foods of America.

[141] **Carruthers. S. P. (Editor)** *Alternative Enterprises for
Agriculture in the UK*. Centre for Agricultural Strategy, Univ. of
Reading 1986 ISBN 0704909820

Some suggested alternative commercial crops for Britain. Readable.
Produced by a University study group.

[154] **Ewart. A. J.** *Flora of Victoria*. 0

A flora of eastern Australia, it is rather short on information that is
useful to the plant project.

[159] **McPherson. A. and S.** *Wild Food Plants of Indiana*. Indiana
University Press 1977 ISBN 0-253-28925-4

A nice pocket guide to this region of America.

[165] **Mills. S. Y.** *The Dictionary of Modern Herbalism.* 0
An excellent small herbal.

[173] **Crowe. A.** *Native Edible Plants of New Zealand.* Hodder and
Stoughton 1990 ISBN 0-340-508302

A very well written and illustrated book based on the authors own
experiments with living on a native diet.

[176] **Yeung. Him-Che.** *Handbook of Chinese Herbs and Formulas.*
Institute of Chinese Medicine, Los Angeles 1985

An excellent Chinese herbal giving information on over 500 species.
Rather technical and probably best suited to the more accomplished
user of herbs.

[183] **Facciola. S.** *Cornucopia - A Source Book of Edible Plants.*
Kampong Publications 1990 ISBN 0-9628087-0-9

Excellent. Contains a very wide range of conventional and
unconventional food plants (including tropical) and where they can be
obtained (mainly N. American nurseries but also research institutes
and a lot of other nurseries from around the world.

[200] **Huxley. A.** *The New RHS Dictionary of Gardening.* 1992.
MacMillan Press 1992 ISBN 0-333-47494-5

Excellent and very comprehensive, though it contains a number of
silly mistakes. Readable yet also very detailed.

[201] **Allardice.P.** *A - Z of Companion Planting.* Cassell Publishers
Ltd. 1993 ISBN 0-304-34324-2

A well produced and very readable book.

[213] **Weiner. M. A.** *Earth Medicine, Earth Food.* Ballantine Books
1980 ISBN 0-449-90589-6

A nice book to read though it is difficult to look up individual plants
since the book is divided into separate sections dealing with the
different medicinal uses plus a section on edible plants. Common
names are used instead of botanical.

[222] **Foster. S. & Duke. J. A.** *A Field Guide to Medicinal Plants.*
Eastern and Central N. America. Houghton Mifflin Co. 1990 ISBN
0395467225

A concise book dealing with almost 500 species. A line drawing of
each plant is included plus colour photographs of about 100 species.
Very good as a field guide, it only gives brief details about the plants
medicinal properties.

[238] **Bown. D.** *Encyclopaedia of Herbs and their Uses.* Dorling
Kindersley, London. 1995 ISBN 0-7513-020-31

A very well presented and informative book on herbs from around the
globe. Plenty in it for both the casual reader and the serious student.
Just one main quibble is the silly way of having two separate entries
for each plant.

[245] **Genders. R.** *Scented Flora of the World.* Robert Hale. London.
1994 ISBN 0-7090-5440-8

An excellent, comprehensive book on scented plants giving a few other plant uses and brief cultivation details. There are no illustrations.

Readers Comments

Weeds as a future source for human consumption

Martha DÃ-az B Thu Jun 28 17:02:26 2001

We recently recieved this article on the use of various weeds in south america. We though that you might enjoy it.

Abstract

Weeds may constitute an additional food source for humans. Up to 66% of weed species are edible and abound in urban and agricultural environments. A total of 43 species were sampled in tropical areas in Coatepec Mexico (e.g. roadsides, urban vacant lots, streets, sugar cane and coffee plantations). A similar survey performed in a temperate area in Bariloche Argentina with 32 species sampled. At a greater geographic scale, a comparison between Mexican and Argentine weeds shows that, proportionately, the food parts vary a little between regions. In general, the uses go from leaves, seeds, roots, fruits, and flowers.

Link: [Weeds as a future source for human consumption](#)

Weeds as a future source for human consumption

Klaus Thu Aug 16 16:12:55 2001

I really wonder what this has to do with montia perfoliata. The edible uses of weeds might be interesting, but not as a comment to this plant.

Edible Wild Plants For Tortoises

Linda King Sat Aug 18 18:20:37 2001

<http://www.tlady.clara.net/TortGuide/Diet.htm>

Please go to my main Diet page and click on the Plant List link at the top. This is a new section of my Tortoise Care website, and is an illustrated Edible Wild Plants list for tortoise keepers in the UK. Click on the Latin names to see the illustrations which are all original work. The information with the illustrations would be equally applicable to iguanas and herbivorous mammals.

Taraxacum officinale

Ralf Sun Dec 16 16:46:59 2001

"LÃ¶wenzahn" flowers are used in northern Germany are used in northern Germany to make a delicious syrup (tastes like honey) and a jelly which is eaten on bread. I bought last summer Dandelion Jelly in the FlÃ¤ming mountains just south of Berlin. The flower buds are traditionally used in Germany to make capers. The leafs are bleached like chicoree during the winter months in the cellar (it must be dark) and gives a delicious vegetable. Ralf

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Taraxacum officinale

Rich Tue Apr 2 21:00:01 2002

Link: [Goosefoot Acres](#) A Site all about Dandelions

Taraxacum officinale

Wed May 18 19:30:08 2005

Link: [Dandelion pictures, poetry, stories, and folklore](#)

Taraxacum officinale

David Beaulieu Mon Jan 16 2006

[Dandelion Greens](#) Dandelion greens: harvesting, preparation, nutrition.

Taraxacum officinale

John Kallas Sat Jul 14 2007

[Making Dandelions Palatable by John Kallas, Ph.D. Issue #82](#) This is an article that explains how to understand and manage dandelion bitterness in food preparation. The article helps you enjoy dandelion flavor raw or cooked.

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