

Did You Know?



Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*

- Dandelion is a member of the Asteraceae family.
- While considered a weed to many, dandelions have a long history of providing early greens for salads as well as a myriad of other culinary and medicinal uses.
- As a food, dandelions have also been used in soups, wine and tea.
- When dried and roasted, the root can be used as a coffee substitute.
- The bright yellow flowers are one of the first pollen sources in spring for bees.
- Common name comes from the early French *dent de lion*, which means “lion’s tooth”, referring to the jagged leaf edges.
- Children around the world pick dandelion seed heads, close their eyes and make a wish as they blow the seeds into the air. Legend also says that:
 - blowing the seeds carries thoughts and dreams to loved ones
 - blowing all of the seeds off in a single breath means that the person you love reciprocates; if seeds remain, the intended has reservations about their feelings towards you.
 - Catching a dandelion seed means your wish will come true
 - Dandelions can help you tell the time or predict the weather
- Leaves are rich in vitamins A, B and C, calcium, potassium, and fiber. They are also the richest source of beta-carotene of all green vegetables.
- Dandelion roots can be used to make a magenta dye.
- Dandelion has been used in Native American, traditional Chinese and traditional Arabic medicine along with other cultures to treat many different types of ailments, including digestive issues, skin disorders, blood disorders, infections, arthritis and rheumatism. It has also been used as a diuretic and to create a general “tonic”.
- Modern research includes cancer, diabetes, jaundice and other liver disease treatment, lactation, and urination promotion. Many of the studies have not included clinical studies in humans.
- Harvest the first greens in spring because they are less bitter.
- Roots harvested in spring will be bitter while roots harvested in the autumn will be sweeter. Scrub well and slice or leave whole to dry.
- Dandelion is commercially produced in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom.
- Read more about dandelions and their uses on HSA’s blog [here](#) and [here](#).