

Grs. 3-6. Dandelion Facts. Directions. Print out. Keep as a reference.

p.1.

NAME _____

dandelion - *n.* A widely naturalized weed having many-rayed yellow flowers and deeply notched basal leaves that is sometimes used in salads. It can be found in food stores, green garden stores, and in its natural habitat.

DANDELION FACTS

NOTE: Dandelion pollen causes severe allergic reactions in people who are sensitive to other pollens such as ragweed. Also, be careful where you pick dandelions if you plan to use them as food. Many places spray weed killer and pesticides in areas where dandelions grow. Check out your local green grocer or health food store if you are unsure.

1. Every spring, before the trees sprout their leaves, the dandelions speckle the landscape with their yellow disks. Dandelions are wild flowers. They are part of the aster family (*Asteraceae*) and one can have as many as 150-200 ray flowers around its central core.

Dandelions bloom from March through October. In the United States, they are considered a pesky weed, an invader of lawns and much time and weed killer is used to get rid of them. In other places, the dandelion is welcomed in the wildflower garden.



NAME _____

Dandelion Facts cont'd.

2. Dandelions are cool season perennial herbaceous plants that grow throughout the United States. They thrive in all but the most extreme climates.

3. Dandelions are found in most lawns throughout the growing season, especially thin turf areas, fields and meadows, along roadsides, cracks of sidewalks, and in disturbed habitats.



Grs. 3-6. Dandelion Facts. Directions. Print out. Keep as a reference.

p.3.

NAME _____

Dandelion Facts cont'd.

4. Dandelions reproduce by seed and root pieces.

5. Appearance. Dandelions emerge above a sturdy taproot to form basal rosettes of narrow, deeply lobed leaves. The dandelion has a long, thick, highly branched taproot. All parts of the plant contain a sticky, milky white sap.

A rosette is a circular or spiral cluster of leaves at the base of a stem of a plant.

A taproot is a prominent and often bulky root that extends downward below the stem of some plants and has fine lateral roots.



The dandelion's taproot makes it very difficult to uproot; the top of the plant breaks away, but the root stays in the ground and can sprout again.

Grs. 3-6. Dandelion Facts. Directions. Print out. Keep as a reference.

p.4.

NAME _____

Dandelion Facts cont'd.

6. Leaves. Dandelion leaves are long and lanced-shaped. They are deeply toothed. Their jagged lobes point back towards the stem. They are 3 to 12 inches long and grow from a basal rosette.



NAME _____

Dandelion Facts cont'd.

7. Flowers. Dandelion inflorescences are yellow composite flowers, 1-2 inches wide, that grow individually on a single, hollow, purplish main stalk from 2-18 inches tall. Each flower head is made up of hundreds of tiny rays. The inflorescences ripen to become round "puffballs" of wind-dispersed seeds, the familiar white globular seed-head. The flowering period is from early spring to late fall.

inflorescence - *n.* Botany. A characteristic arrangement of flowers on a single stalk. The part of the plant consisting of the flower-bearing stalk.



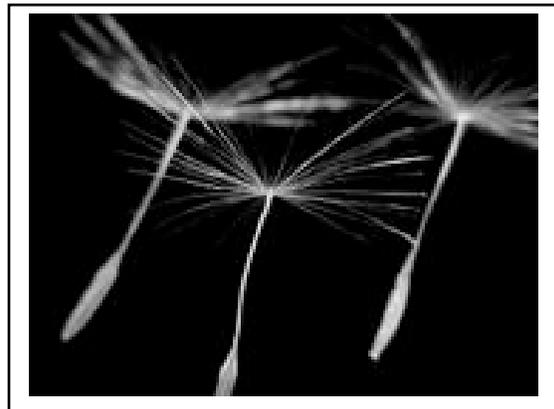
Grs. 3-6. Dandelion Facts. Directions. Print out. Keep as a reference.

p.6.

NAME _____

Dandelion Facts cont'd.

8. Dandelion seeds are airborne. The seeds will be carried by the wind because they have soft silky hairs that act like parachutes, keeping them afloat. A week after the dandelion head closes, it opens again into a ball of gray fluff composed of tiny silky parachutes; each parachute is attached to one dandelion fruit containing a single seed. A passing breeze lifts the fruits with their miniature parachutes into the air, where they can be carried for miles to a new fertile home where they can develop into new dandelions plants. These tiny seeds are also sought after by many birds.□



Grs. 3-6. Dandelion Facts. Directions. Print out. Keep as a reference.

NAME _____

Dandelion Facts cont'd.

9. Dandelions provide food for pollinating insects. The dandelion ranks high among honey-producing plants and dandelions are the main food source for at least 93 different kinds of insects. Because of this, they attract beneficial insects like ladybugs (which are important because they love to eat aphids). Some of the pollinators are:



ladybug



bee



Common blue butterfly



Peacock butterfly

NAME _____

Dandelion Facts cont'd.

Pollinators cont'd.



beetle



bumblebee



flies



bugs



NAME _____

Dandelion Facts cont'd.

10. Dandelions are unrivalled in the plant kingdom. They are used as a food, a beverage stock, and for medicine and dietary supplements.

Dandelion leaves are the most commonly used part and are similar in flavor to endive. Harvesting the leaves in early spring is recommended, before they turn bitter. Many enjoy the dandelion leaves boiled like spinach, mixed in salads, or deep-fried. Baby dandelion leaves are often found in haute cuisine (classic high-quality French cooking).

Parts of the dandelion may be consumed in a tea, a wine, an extract or tincture, or in combination with other medicinal herbs and flavorings in a reduced broth.

But it is as a medicine that the dandelion continues to shine.

1. Dandelion leaves are used as a diuretic, but an unconventional one. While most diuretic preparations leach potassium from the body, dandelion leaves provide an abundant source of potassium.

2. Leaves are also used to treat high blood pressure because of their ability to reduce the volume of fluid in the body.

3. Dandelion root has been shown to stimulate bile production by the liver and is used to cleanse the liver. The root is also a gentle laxative. It is considered one of the most effective detoxifying herbs. It works on the liver, the kidneys and the gallbladder to accelerate the removal of toxins from the body. It also is used to relieve constipation, skin problems such as eczema and psoriasis, to prevent

NAME _____

Dandelion Facts cont'd.

and possibly dissolve gallstones, and to treat osteoarthritis and gout. The root, when dried, has been used in coffee substitutes.

Weed: Dandelion.

Scientific Name: *Taraxacum officinale*

Family: Aster family (Asteraceae, formerly Compositae).

Life Cycle: Cool season perennial.

Reproduction Method: Reproduces by seed and root pieces.

Appearance: Dandelions emerge above a long, sturdy tap root to form basal rosettes of narrow, deeply lobed leaves.

Leaves: These leaves are 2 to 10 inches long and up to 2 1/2 inches wide. They have jagged lobes that point back towards the stem.

Flowers: Dandelion inflorescences are yellow, up to 2 inches in diameter, and appear to be solitary. They are borne on hollow stems that can grow up to 20 inches long, and held above the foliage. The inflorescences ripen to become round "puffballs" of wind-dispersed seeds. Flowering period is from early spring to late fall.