

Herb of the Week



Botanical name: *Taraxacum officinale*

Common name: Dandelion

Folk/Other names: Dient de Leon, Blowball, cankerwort, lion's tooth, piss-a-bed, priest's crown, puffball, swine snout, white endive, wild endive

Family: Asteraceae

Key words: Composites of many small flowers in a disk-like flower head

Habitat and Range: Native to Europe and Asia, now naturalized in meadows and waysides around the world; all temperature zones. A "soil doctor," dandelion grows in disturbed soil, and helps to break up compacted soil

Botanical description: Perennial, generally unbranched taproot has a dark brown skin and light flesh within. Hairless leaves in a basal rosette; depending on habitat, leaves are more or less deeply serrated (check the back of the leaf for hairs on the midrib: no hairs – dandelion; yes hairs – chicory). One to ten+ stems per plant. Stems generally grow to about 4-12 inches tall, round, hollow, and smooth. Each hollow, unbranched stem and has one single flower head. Yellow composite flower heads. A "blow-ball" of many rays is formed when the seeds mature.

Parts used: Root (dried), leaf (fresh), flower

Harvesting and Processing: Harvest leaves in the spring and fall when there is no flowering stalk present. Eat leaves fresh; freeze or dry to store. Harvest flowers in the summer, when in flower. Harvest roots in the early spring or late fall, when no flower stalks are present. For highest inulin content, harvest root in the fall, for a stronger bitter, dig roots in the spring. Clean and dry to store for tea (store

whole: do not cut into root or leaves so that the juice may stay intact); or make a fresh plant tincture, of leaves and roots separately or together. Fresh root tincture only – inulin from fresh plant is soluble in water or alcohol, inulin from dried plant is soluble only in hot water. Taraxacin, bitter constituent high in spring-dug roots, is soluble in the dried roots in cold water.

Therapeutic Preparation and Dosage:

Root – tincture: 2.5-5 mL three times daily (1:5, 60%)
decoction: 2-3 tsp dried root in 1 cup of water, drunk three times daily
Leaf – tincture: 5-10 mL three times daily (1:5, 40%)
infusion: 1-2 tsp dried leaf in 1 cup of water, drunk three times daily
leaf may also be eaten raw in salads

Energetics:

Root – oily, drying; Leaf – cool, drying

Taste:

Root – bitter, sweet, earthen, salty; Leaf – bitter, earthen, salty

Medicinal Actions:

-**Root:** hepatic, cholagogue, tonic, nutritive, galactagogue, bitter/ digestive stimulant, stomachic, aperient, laxative, diuretic, bactericide, fungicide, astringent, hypnotic, sedative
-**Leaf:** nutritive, alkalinizer, tonic, galactagogue, stomachic, cholagogue, aperient, diuretic, vulnerary, anodyne, slight narcotic
-**Flower:** emollient, anodyne, vulnerary, hepatic, calmative, cardio-tonic
-**Sap:** use externally as discutient (hinders abnormal growth), anodyne, keratolytic (removes warts and other skin lesions), antifungal, antibacterial

Indications:

-The **leaf** is a tonic to **kidney** function and is the most powerful herbal diuretic, and is also one of the best natural sources of potassium, making it a balanced remedy that may be safely used when a diuretic is called for.
-**Bitter** flavor in leaf and root stimulate bile secretion (stimulates digestion and assimilation)
-**Root** is a **liver** and **gallbladder** tonic; prevents and treats gallstones, congested liver and gallbladder; jaundice from backed-up bile; constipation from lack of bile in the intestines (works well combined with burdock)
-Drains liver heat; treats headaches caused by liver heat (sign: red tongue, esp. on sides)
-Stomach: indigestion, gas

- Laxative for those with frontal headaches, biliousness, or hemorrhoids
-High cholesterol, high blood pressure, cardiorenal edema
-Treats acne, boils, eczema, herpes, age spots, abscesses, boils
-Type II diabetes, hypoglycemia (inulin, the tasteless white polysaccharide that can have a

beneficial influence on carbohydrate metabolism – especially sugar, is highest in the root in the fall); edema, kidney stones, chronic kidney infection; swollen, achy feeling in the kidney region that feels better after urination

-Breast congestion; PMS; menopausal problems from poor liver function; liver not breaking down extra hormones

-Muscular pain, swelling, heat, especially in the sternocleidomastoid muscle and neck; inflammation of the muscles; muscles tight and swollen

-Chronic rheumatism and arthritis (due to diuretic effect)

-Acute fever with high temperature, dark red tongue or patch of dark red on the tongue

-Great spring tonic and blood “thinner”

-Dried flowers into tea for nonspecific heart distress

Contraindication: Do not use dandelion in the case of backed bile ducts or intestinal obstruction. Dandelion may theoretically cause allergic reactions in people sensitive to the Asteraceae family. Rare reports of contact dermatitis in people frequently coming into contact with the latex found in the stem. Diuretics should be used with caution in low blood pressure.

Other uses:

-Natural dye: Flower – light yellow. Root – rich magenta

-Dandelion coffee

-Leaves in salads

-Flower heads used for making wine

Spiritual/Magical Information:

Gender: Masculine Planet: Jupiter Element: Air Diety: Hecate

Powers: Divination, wishes, calling spirits

Magical uses: To find out how long you will live (blow the seeds off the head of a dandelion- you will live as many years as there are seeds left on the head)

-The dandelion root tea promotes psychic powers; set the tea next to the bed to call spirits

-To send a message to a loved one, blow at the seed head in his or her direction and visualize your message

-Bury dandelion in the northwest center of the house to bring favorable winds