



Website: www.herbs.org.nz



Dandelion

Taraxacum officinale

Family Name: Asteraceae

Common Names: Dandelion, Blow ball, Lion's Tooth, Cankerwort, Priest's Snout

Description: A common perennial herb found in lawns, gardens and waste areas. It has a strong taproot and the leaves form a rosette from the base, are jagged in shape and hairless. Each flower head is found on a single hollow stem and consists of many ray florets, which mature to form the familiar dandelion 'clock' of seeds with a downy parachute attached.

Parts Used: root, leaves, flower and sap. The young leaves are eaten as a salad (traditionally a 'spring' salad in Europe, while the inulin rich roots are collected in autumn, dried and used as a coffee substitute).

Character: The plant is quiet smooth, cold, soft and moist to touch. It has an earthy, slightly savoury smell, the leaves are bitter but not unpleasantly so and salty, the flower petals have an instant sweet taste.

Active Constituents: The root contains sesquiterpene lactones, triterpenes, phenolic acids, inulin, tannins, potassium, calcium, sodium, phosphorus, iron, nickel, cobalt, tin, copper, zinc, vitamins A, B, C and D, choline.

Actions: Bitter tonic, choleric, diuretic (leaf), mild laxative, and antirheumatic.

Nutritional Constituents: vitamins A, B, C, D, minerals potassium, iron, zinc, copper, calcium, sodium, nickel, cobalt, tin.

Medicinal Uses: The action of dandelion is very much via stimulation of the liver and kidney function. Both parts of the herb have activities in both areas though the leaves are stronger for the kidneys excretion and the root for the liver based secretion. As a diuretic it is of great benefit to tissue function because while it increases loss of sodium, it balances electrolytes by increasing the cellular levels of potassium. Because of its high inulin content dandelion tea can be useful for diabetics, also having a beneficial balancing effect on the pancreas. Beneficial to the musculoskeletal system by way of increased excretion of metabolic waste.

Historical Uses: "Cleanseth imposthumes and inward ulcers in the urinary passages" and to help those with cachexy - meaning a bad habit of the body. Phthisis and skin diseases such as scurvy, scrofula, eczema and eruptive skin conditions generally. The white latex in the stem has been used to treat warts. Root has been used to make a coffee.

Precautions: repeated exposure to the milky latex may cause contact dermatitis.

Prepared by Irene MacCulloch
For The Herb Federation of New Zealand's Herb Awareness Week 11th - 18th March 2007
Inquires to HFNZ, PO Box 42, Katikati

Fast Flower Fritters
(serves two generously)

1 cup wholewheat flour
1 tspn baking powder
Pinch of salt 1 egg
½ cup milk or water
2 tblspns olive oil
1 cup dandelion petals
Mix the dry ingredients. Beat egg, add liquid and oil. Stir into dry mix, then stir in the dandelion petals. Cook like pancakes and serve hot with jam, syrup or butter.

Thoughts

"The miracles of nature do not seem miracles because they are so common. If no one had ever seen a flower, even a dandelion would be the most startling event in the world"

THE DANDELION

*There is a flower that decks the plain
And fills our heart with pleasure
The Dandelion is its name
We hold it as a treasure*

*This useful plant with jagged leaves
And pretty yellow flower
Is famous as a medicine
That gives the liver power*

*To properly prepare the blood
And regulate the bile
Assists digestion, and induce
The pleasant healthful smile*

*The doctors may be sceptical
Of any virtue in it
Yet many who have tried it well
Can praise it in a minute*

*Not only as a medicine
But also as a food
The root made into coffee
Most certainly is good*

*And if your ill and want a pill
You surely can rely on
Don't take the old imported ones
But try the Dandelion*

*Extract from The NZ Family Herb Doctor
pub. 1891 by James F Neil M.D. Doctor*

Use young Dandelion leaves in your salads, they are high in many vitamins and minerals

Hot Dandelion & Bacon

4 slices bacon 1 ½ cups dandelion leaves
¾ cup wine vinegar salt to taste
Cook chopped bacon till crisp and add vinegar. When hot add chopped dandelion leaves and salt to taste. Cover and cook slowly until leaves are tender, serve with mashed potato.

Dandelion Coffee: Dig the fresh roots in autumn, thoroughly clean, pat dry, cut up fine, then roast until they are hint of coffee (1 - 1 ½ hours at 150 degrees C). Grind in a coffee grinder and store in an airtight container. Add 1 teaspoon of coffee to 1 cup of water, then milk and sugar if you must. Dandelion coffee is a natural beverage without any of the injurious effects that ordinary coffee and tea have on the nerves and the digestive organs, and does not cause wakefulness.

Dandelion Vinegar

Use a glass jar with a plastic lid, wash the fresh wilted herb, pat dry, and chop up. Steep the chopped herb in apple cider vinegar for 6 weeks, strain out the plant material, bottle and label. A medicinal dose is 15 mls per 50kg of body weight
Best used within 2 years

Dandelion Wine

- 1 litre dandelion blossoms-calyx removed
- 4 litres water
- ½ cup tepid water
- 1 yeast cake
- 500 gms seedless raisins
- 1.5kg sugar
- 1 lemon, 1 orange (cut in small pieces including skin)

Add the dandelion blossoms to the 4 litres of water and simmer for 30 mins. Pour thru a strainer, then cheesecloth. When cool add the yeast which has been dissolved in the tepid water, raisins, sugar, lemon and orange. Stir it everyday for 2 weeks, then strain and let settle for a day. Strain again carefully thru cheesecloth bottle and seal.