

TARAXACUM OFFICINALE

Dandelion



BREAK THE BINARY
MIGRATION IS BEAUTIFUL!

Some of the sources consulted to research this zine are Indigenous herbal experts. It is important to acknowledge and make space for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of colour) voices in herbalism.

The information offered here is intended as a general introduction, with the expectation that you will do any further research needed and take your own health situation into consideration when deciding what kind of relationship to build with this plant.

“I truly believe that the hatred of dandelions is just the hatred of the natural world.” “Perhaps the dandelion is despised because it is free.”

—Mary Siisip Geniusz, *Plants have so much to give us, all we have to do is ask*

Dandelion often gets maligned as an opportunistic weed, but the truth is that it's a very community-minded plant. It breaks up compacted soil, attracts earthworms, draws nutrients up from the depths to make them available to shallow rooted plants, removes toxins from its surroundings, and is generally ready to improve the wellbeing of those that ask for its help.

Herbal medicine can become too focused on strong, heroic herbs, when gentle, gradual, cohesive healing is a better option whenever possible. Dandelion offers exactly that kind of wellness.

Botanical name: *Taraxacum officinale*.

Former botanical names: *Herba taraxacon*, *herba urinaria*, *leontodon taraxacum*.

Common names: There are many common names for this plant, but here are a few of my favourites: wild endive, blowball, piss-en-lit (pee in the bed), lion's teeth, fairy clock, clocks and watches, doodooshaaboojibik (little suns, in anishinaabe), and in China, "yellow flowered earth nail" and "golden hairpin weed."

Family: Asteraceae, a.k.a. Compositae (sunflower)

Summary: A lot of people write dandelion off as a weed, or pass it up for stronger medicines. Truthfully though, dandelion has so much to offer!

Dandelion does great things for our gardens, breaking up compacted soil, drawing nutrients up towards the surface, and encouraging earthworms. It's also a great food for pets and livestock, and a compost activator.

This plant's four big healing strengths are liver support, digestive support, incredible nutrition, and its diuretic qualities.

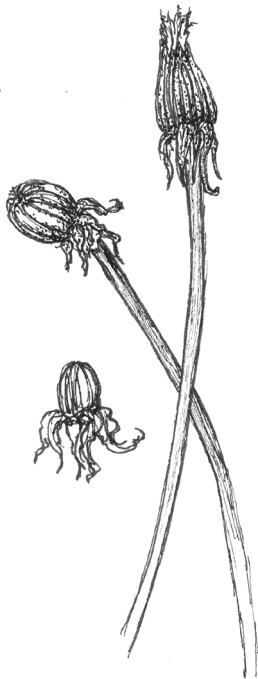
When we consider all the body functions and physical ailments that are connected to these qualities, we begin to see how important dandelion is; dandelion's actions impact skin health and help recovery from chemotherapy, poisons, drug and alcohol addictions, long illnesses, and general excess. It helps the body avoid or fight cancer, helps our

absorption of nutrients, helps discomfort that may result from poor digestion, decreases inflammation, decreases water retention, helps pre-menstrual and menstrual pain, helps hypertension, and offers great nutrition as a food. (To read more, see Qualities/ actions and Clinical applications.)

Dandelion is a great example of how many good medicines are also foods, and vice versa. One cup of fresh dandelion greens offers more vitamin A per weight than carrots, and 500% of the daily recommended intake of vitamin K. Dandelion also offers a lot of minerals, including potassium and its cofactors. (See Recipes for some ideas on how to work this plant into your meals.)

Dandelion isn't the kind of plant you take to cure a short term illness. It's the herbal equivalent of nurturing a regular yoga practice, rather than waiting until you get hurt and then going to the chiropractor. Arguably, this is the best kind of herbal medicine; it's good to have herbal first aid on hand for acute situations, but the foundation of our relationship to plants should be built on good habits that are integrated into our daily life (and meals!).

Dandelion is a very safe plant, even for the very young, the elderly, and those who are pregnant or breastfeeding. However, the milky latex from the stems, like most of these types of saps,



can irritate skin. There are also a few contraindications related to specific illnesses or medications. (See Safety.)

There is a bit of variety between what the leaves offer and what the roots offer, but their qualities are quite similar. There are also many subspecies of dandelion, but they're all edible and medicinal. There are some false friends, i.e. plants that resemble dandelion but are not dandelion, but none are toxic, and dandelion can be easily differentiated from them using a few key identification points. (See Identification and False friends.)

Dandelions can be drunk as tea, or taken as a tincture, although the tincture should ideally be supplemented with a whole plant source of minerals (i.e. fresh nettle or nettle infusion) to counteract the potassium lost through diuresis. General dosage ranges from 1/2 cup to 2 cups a day for tea, and from 1–2 droppersful per day to 1–3 droppersful 3 times per day for the tincture. (See Dosage.)

Better yet, dandelion can be eaten fresh in salads, soups, smoothies, stir-fries, infused into oil or vinegar, made into beer, roasted as a coffee substitute, or pickled; the edible possibilities are almost infinite. (See Recipes.)

Dandelion can be harvested quite sustainably with the one stipulation that flowers should not be over-harvested in the spring and fall when few other flowers are available; pollinators and insects can rely heavily on dandelion at these times. It's also often commercially cultivated.

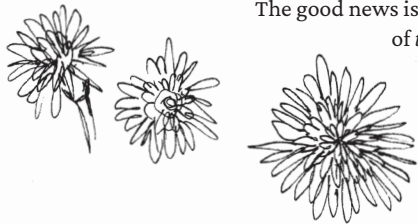
Sustainability/ethics: Dandelion is a super-abundant (technically invasive) plant that can probably be found in your yard, if you have a yard. It's easy to cultivate and runs no risk of being overharvested. It grows almost everywhere, so from an ethical standpoint it's an excellent herb to use for your wellbeing.

History of human/plant relationship: Dandelion probably originated in the Far East or Middle East. Its use was documented in Arabic countries in the 11th century. By the 16th century it was well established as an official herbal remedy, as evidenced by "officinale" in the botanical name. It is used throughout the world, and has made its way into local herbal knowledge in most places it's found.

Natural habitat: Originally from Eurasia, but grows throughout the temperate regions of the world in lawns, fields, and roadsides. Prefers high acid soil, but any spare bit of soil (or sidewalk crack) will do just fine.

Identification: *Taraxacum officinale* itself is actually a group of many species (numbers vary from up to 100 to several hundred) which are hard to tell from one another.

The good news is, they are all safe medicinal plants. The leaves of *taraxacum officinale* are irregularly and deeply toothed, shiny, and hairless (a lack of hair on the underside of the midvein of the leaf is a good way to be certain you've found the right



plant). The leaves grow as a rosette, or cluster, directly from the ground (not off of stems). The taproot can be up to a foot long, dark brown on the outside, creamy on the inside, generally with one main taproot that grows straight down. The flowers are yellow, one flower per hollow stem, with a milky sap released when the stem is broken. Flowers close in the evening and reopen in the morning, (hence the common names “fairy clocks” and “clocks and watches”) and may also close if rain or a storm is coming. Flowers are succeeded by the round puffball of seeds.

If purchasing dried plant material, the dried leaf should be crisp and a strong green colour, and the root should have brown parts (the outer skin) and creamy parts (the inner root).

Taste I.D.: The fresh leaf is bitter but a bit sweet; the fresh root is bittersweet and starchy.

False friends: There are a few plants that can look a lot like dandelion such as cat’s ear, chicory wild lettuce, or hawkweed, but none of them are toxic. To be certain that you have dandelion, confirm that your plant has the following:

- hollow, unbranched flower stems (one flower per stem).
- milky sap in the flower stem.



- no hairs on the leaves or stems. in particular, no hairs on the underside of the midvein.

Cultivation: Dandelion is a perennial, meaning the same plant comes back every year. It reproduces by seed, and is self-fertilizing; one dandelion is all it takes to make more dandelions. Dandelions can also be propagated from the root; this is why, if you dig one out and don't get the entire root, it will grow back.

When dandelion is grown as a commercial food it's often grown as an annual, as older plants become more bitter. Seed germination takes 3–6 weeks.

If you want to use dandelions for salad greens, pick off flower buds before they open to prolong the least bitter stage of the growing cycle. Plentiful watering will also decrease bitterness.

Part used: Whole plant. Different parts are best harvested at different points in the season.

When and how to harvest: Because dandelion is an environmental detoxifier, gather away from heavy traffic or other sources of toxins.

- Harvest the whole plant before it flowers (to juice for spring tonics, or tincture as a whole plant tincture).
- Leaves are best before flowering, but can be harvested onwards if you can handle the bitterness.

- Flowers are harvested when open.
- Roots are best harvested in the fall of at least the second year of growth, after first frost. The plants with the biggest flowers have the biggest roots.

Chemical constituents: Rather than listing all constituents and leaving you with a block of incomprehensible scientific language, I'll explain a bit about some of the constituents that are most relevant to the herbal actions discussed in this zine.

Taraxacin: a resin, and one of the bitter/digestive elements.

Inulin: a mucilage that improves digestion.

An interesting detail is that spring-dug roots are highest in Taraxacin, while fall dug roots are highest in Inulin.

Choline: neither a vitamin nor a mineral, but it often gets grouped with B-vitamins, as it functions similarly. It is essential for the body's functioning, and the body can only produce small amounts of it, which means we need to make sure it's in our food. It impacts liver health, brain development, muscle function, as well as the nervous system and metabolism.

Caffeic Acid: has anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant effects.

On the liver and what it does: The liver filters blood and removes byproducts of body processes, chemical contamination, unneeded hormones, some infectious organisms,

and ammonia. It adds bile, glucose, lipoproteins, urea, cholesterol, phospholipids, and plasma proteins.

An unhealthy liver can lead to build up of toxins or unwanted hormones, and infections, amongst other problems. Often skin issues like acne or psoriasis are linked to toxins not being removed properly by the liver and as a result exiting the body through the membrane of the skin.

What we see with dandelion is that improving liver function has impacts on many other systems of the body.

Qualities/actions: Liver tonic, digestive, diuretic, nutritive.

Hepatic/cholagogue: Dandelion roots and leaves stimulate the liver to produce and release bile, which then aids in cleansing the blood, removing toxins from the body. This is likely connected to the high choline content of the root. Choline also stimulates the liver to replace damaged cells. The caffeic acid present in dandelion is also a hepatoprotective, i.e. it protects and supports the liver.

Digestive: The bitter qualities in the leaves in particular stimulate the secretion of salivary and gastric juices, which aids digestion. Bitter foods are often consumed at the beginning of a meal for this reason.

Diuretic: Dandelion can help remove excess water from the body. There are many diuretics available, both natural and commercial, but dandelion stands above because it replaces the potassium and sodium (electrolytes) that are lost along with the water. Potassium absorbs best when combined with zinc and magnesium, which are also present in dandelion. (These minerals are best absorbed by eating fresh greens.) The tincture also has diuretic qualities but does not have the mineral content. If you use the tincture, consider combining it with something like nettle infusion to get your minerals.

Nutritive: As well as being a good medicine, dandelion is an excellent food. It offers more than 100% of daily recommended Vitamin A, 500+% of vitamin K, and 30% of vitamin C in a single cup of fresh or cooked greens.

Clinical applications: Because of dandelion's impacts on liver, and because water retention and digestion impact so many systems in the body, dandelion functions as an overall tonic, or alterative—which is to say that it has gentle, wide reaching benefits on the overall functioning of the body.

Liver support and secondary effects: Enhancing bile production and liver function helps with blood cleansing, lymphatic support, and toxin removal,



and can improve conditions like liver congestion, bile duct inflammation, hepatitis, gallstones, and jaundice. Further impacts include decreasing chances of cancer, helping recovery from chemotherapy, helping recovery from poisons, recovering from alcohol or drug abuse, improving skin health, and detoxification after prolonged illness or colds and flu. The negative impacts of any kind of excess (excess eating, drinking, overworking, hangovers) can be helped by dandelion.

Diuretic effects and secondary effects: Decreasing water retention has positive impacts on hypertension and helps to reduce inflammation, pre-menstrual and menstrual discomfort, arthritis, swelling of the joints, and gout. Interestingly, while dandelion increases urine flow, it also strengthens the urinary system, helping with bedwetting and incontinence.

PMS and menstruation: Discomfort can be helped both by decreasing water retention, and by improving the liver's ability to clear excess estrogen and other hormones.

Diabetes: Dandelion's inulin content may help prevent sudden and severe fluctuations of blood sugar levels, and may increase insulin secretion from the pancreas to help manage diabetes. Dandelion might be a good ally to those approaching diabetes, as dandelion cannot be combined with pharmaceutical diabetes medications once those medications are required because it has a similar effect to those medications.

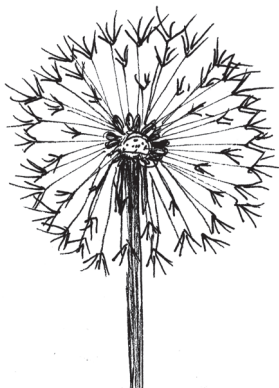
Cancer: A Japanese study from 1979 found that dandelion tincture inhibited growth of cancer cells. In another study, antibodies to tumours were produced from dandelion. Dandelion has traditionally been used in China to treat breast cancer.

Nutritional information: Dandelion is high in vitamins A, B-1 (thiamine), C and K. (it has the highest vitamin A content of all greens, with four times more vitamin A than carrots!)

Dandelion is a rare natural source of body-assimilatable copper. 3-4 helpings per year can keep our copper at healthy levels.

Nutritional info for 1 cup (55g) of raw greens, and percentage of recommended daily intake:

- Sodium: 42 mg - 1% (electrolytes)
- Potassium: 218 mg - 6% (electrolytes)
- Vitamin A: 5588IU - 112%
- Vitamin C: 19.3 mg - 32%
- Vitamin E: 1.9 mg - 9%
- Vitamin K: 428 mcg - 535%
- Thiamin: 0.1 mg - 7%
- Riboflavin: 0.1 mg - 8%
- Vitamin B-6: 0.1mg - 5%
- Calcium: 103 mg - 10%
- Iron: 1.7 mg - 9%



- Magnesium: 19.8 mg - 5%
- Zinc: 0.2 mg, - 2%

The root also offers a lot of calcium, protein, phosphorus, iron, riboflavin, niacin, and potassium.

Preparation: This plant can be taken as food, tea, decoction or tincture, but if used as a diuretic, eating the fresh leaves is best in order to get the potassium content.

- Leaves can be eaten fresh in salad, soups, smoothies.
- Roots can be cooked and eaten like other root vegetables. (See recipes.)
- Fresh juice of the leaf, root ,or whole plant can be made using a juicer.
- Tea: 2 tsp of leaf or root in 1 cup of boiling water, steep for 5-10 minutes.
- Decoction: Start with 4 oz fresh plant, 2 pints of water. Simmer down to 1 pint and strain.
- Cold Extract: 2 tsp plant with 2 cups of water, let stand 8 hours.
- Dandelion flower infused oil: Pick enough flowers to fill a jar. Add extra virgin olive oil, ensure that there are no air pockets. Cover with cloth and a rubber band and leave in a warm, sunny place. After a week or two, flowers will be limp and have lost their colour. Strain, pour off oil, leave any watery bits at the bottom



behind. This oil is helpful for stiff joints, dry skin, can also be added to salad or salad dressing.

- Tincture: Root and leaves (fresh, ideally) can be tinctured separately, or a whole plant tincture can be made from fresh young plants in spring. If measuring, use around a 1:1 plant weight to solvent ratio. Alternately, just fill a jar with the young plants and add enough alcohol to cover. When using fresh plant material, use a higher strength of alcohol if possible, at least 50%, but if you only have access to 40%, don't be afraid to use that.
- Herbal vinegar: Use the whole plant fresh, or root or leaves, using a 1:1 ratio of herb weight to vinegar. Let sit for one month and use within one year. Apple cider or white vinegar is fine.
- Drying and storing the plant: Both roots and leaves can be hung to dry, out of direct sunlight. A dehydrator can also be used. When leaves are dry, they are crisp and a strong green colour. When roots are dry, they're dark brown outside and creamy inside. Roots can be left to dry intact, but if they're very large, cut them lengthwise.

Dosage: One of the best ways to get dandelion into your system is to eat it! As a general rule, eat as much dandelion as you enjoy.

Regarding tinctures and teas, dosage can range from 1–2 droppersful per day to 1–3 droppersful 3 times per day, for tinctures of root or leaves, and 1/2 cup to 2 cups per day

for teas of root or leaves. If taking the juice of the fresh root, leaf, or both, (which is a very effective way to use dandelion), take 1–6 tbsp per day.

If you're just trying to improve your overall health, go for the low end of these dosages, and if you're trying to treat a specific element of your health, go for the higher end. For acute (short term) problems, i.e. menstrual discomfort or skin outbreaks, use smaller but more frequent doses.

As a diuretic, dandelion is best taken as a food, tea, or fresh juice in order to access the minerals in the plant, which cannot be absorbed into the alcohol of a tincture. If these options aren't available, the tincture is effective, but ideally should be supplemented with a plant (fresh or dried, tea or food) that can replace potassium, such as stinging nettle.

Safety: This plant is very safe to use, including for infants, children, seniors, and those who are pregnant or breastfeeding, although these groups shouldn't use large doses for long periods of time.

The milky sap of the flower stem may upset skin (milky saps often can).

Dandelion combines well with other herbs that support the liver.

There are some interactions and cautions to be aware of:

- Dandelion is high in vitamin K, which is wonderful, but like other foods high in vitamin K, it should be avoided by those on pharmaceutical blood thinners such as warfarin (coumadin) or clopidogrel (plavix).

- The bitter qualities are not helpful to those with stomach ulcers, as the bitterness increases the acidity of the stomach.
- Dandelion is not good for those with blocked bowels or gallstones.
- Because of dandelion's bacteriostatic and fungistatic qualities, do not combine with antibiotics.
- May increase the side effects of lithium, when used to treat bipolar disorder.
- Do not combine dandelion with prescription diabetic medications.

Combines Well With:

- Burdock for deep body cleansing .
- Celandine or barberry for congested liver.
- Licorice root for those who want to counteract the bitter flavour.

Recipes: Dandelion is a great spring rejuvenation food, offering many nutrients that people traditionally might be deficient in at the end of a hard winter. It has a higher nutritional value than broccoli or spinach, and more vitamin A per weight than carrots.



Many people are put off by the bitterness of the plant, but fear not, there are so many exciting and creative ways to enjoy dandelion! Below is a list of general ideas, followed by one or two specific recipes.

Avoiding bitterness in the leaves and flowers:

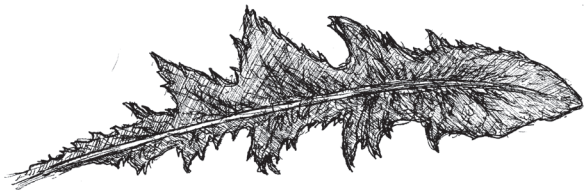
- To remove some of the bitterness, you can blanch the leaves before harvesting; simply cover the plant with a pot or other object to block sunlight.
- Bitterness can also be decreased by boiling the leaves for a few minutes and discarding the water. A few changes of water can be used if necessary.
- Many find the bitterness masked by cooking the greens with oil. Bacon fat (think: dandelion bacon salad!) seems to be a traditional choice.
- Adding other flavours, like vinegar or sweet flavours, can mask the bitterness.
- Plants that get lots of water tend to be less bitter. Consider watering your “weeds”!
- When eating the flowers, remove all green parts from the flower and remove the stem entirely.

Some general culinary ideas:

- Stir fry the spring roots and leaves along with onion, garlic, mushrooms, olive oil, tamari, and sesame oil.
- Use the leaves to make a spinach dip.
- Try dandelion miso soup.
- Crumble the dried leaf into smoothies or soups (a great way to get your greens in winter).
- Throw some fresh leaves in a salad.
- Scatter the flower petals (without the stems or green parts) on top of a salad.
- Use dandelion infused vinegar or dandelion flower oil in your salad dressing.
- Batter and fry the flowers (pick them while they're open and use them quickly to avoid wilting).
- Harvest buds before they open, and pickle them to make dandelion "capers."
- Harvest the buds and sautee them.
- Add the root to a winter or fall soup with beans and other root vegetables.
- Throw fresh dandelion leaves in a glass of white wine and let it soak for an hour before drinking it.
- Add a bit of dandelion infused vinegar to drinking water for liver/kidney support.
- Dandelion can be used to bitter beer in place of hops (without the estrogen enhancing or sedative effect of hops).

Dandelion and egg
breakfast dish:

- 4 cups dandelion greens
- 1 large leek
- 4 large eggs, refrigerated
- 2 tbsp butter, unsalted
- 1/4 cup feta cheese



1. (optional) Blanche the greens to decrease bitterness. Add chopped greens to a pot of boiling water and leave in for a few minutes. Drain, and press out liquid.
2. Melt the butter in a 10" pan, at medium heat. Sauté the leeks until tender. Add the drained dandelion greens. (If you don't blanch the greens, add them a little earlier.)
3. When the greens are wilted, crack the eggs into the pan, roughly equally spaced, on top of the greens. Top with feta cheese and cook uncovered until the whites of the eggs are set, about five minutes.

Even without blanching the greens, the bitterness of the dandelion leaves fits well with the flavours of the feta and leek. I love this powerful, rejuvenating spring breakfast dish.

(Recipe from abeautifulplate.com)

Root brew:

Dandelion roots, when roasted, make a substitute for coffee. Some folks seem to dry and then roast the roots, and others just roast them directly after harvesting.

Roast clean, chopped roots in a skillet for 10–20 minutes until dark brown, or in a 200 degree oven for 4 hours. Once roasted, the roots can be put into a coffee grinder and prepared the same way coffee is normally prepared. (I have not tried this with an espresso maker, but french press, drip, or cowboy coffee should be fine.)

People often combine dandelion roots with other herbs and foods to get a more nuanced flavour. Some options include: dried chicory, cinnamon bark chips, dried beet root, roasted barley, cardamom, roasted rye, or acorns.

Sweet and sour pickled dandelion buds:

1.5 cups of tightly closed, freshly harvested dandelion buds

2 garlic cloves, pressed

1 tbsp fresh grated ginger root

1 tsp yellow mustard seed

1 bay leaf

1/3 c local honey

Tamari or shoyu sauce

Apple cider vinegar

Gather dandelion buds; dandelions open and close every day, so ensure that you're picking the ones that have not ever opened, not the ones that are just closed temporarily. Pull off the little leaves just below the buds so that you're left with nice round, smooth buds.

Put the buds into a jar and add the garlic, ginger, mustard seed, and honey. Pour over shoyu or tamari sauce until the jar is 1/3 full. Fill the remainder with apple cider vinegar and place the bay leaf on top.

Cover, shake, and let pickle for at least one week in the refrigerator. Use the way you might use capers: as garnishes, sides, snacks, on pizza, in omelettes, or in sandwiches.

(Recipe from *saltfatwhiskey.com*)

Dandelion flower beer:

Gather 100 dandelion flowers. Boil 4 pints of water with 3.5 oz of light brown sugar until sugar dissolves. Let cool until tepid, pour over the flowers in a large container. Add a lemon, finely sliced.

Cover the container with a clean cloth and set aside for 3–4 days, stirring occasionally. Strain and pour into tightly corked bottles. Beer will be ready to drink in a few days.

(Recipe from *Backyard Medicine* by Bruton-Seal and Seal.)

As a Dye Plant:

Yellow or yellow-green: General consensus is that the flowers will yield a yellow, and leaves and flowers will yield yellow-green. Using a mordant is recommended. Dye stuff to fibre ratio should be 1:1. Brighter colours will result on animal fibre (this is generally true), and both leaves and flowers are best used fresh.

Magenta: Multiple sources say that the roots can yield a light magenta, while other sources seem to imply that this is easier said than done. Here are some rough instructions from Mary Geniusz's amazing book, *Plants have so much to give us, all we have to do is ask*:

“Harvest mature dandelion roots, cut and smash them, cover them in soft water, simmer for several hours, let sit over night. Filter the liquid, put pre-wetted wool (alum mordanted) and simmer for 30 mins or longer. Should yield a light magenta dye.”

Other sources say the root will yield a yellow-brown. Variation may depend on the mordant, as well as other factors.

Other Uses and Functions:

- Dandelions are a good source of copper for herbal fertilizer. Pick three plants, place them in a bucket, pour over 1 litre of boiling water, cover and let stand for 30 minutes. Strain and use that day.
- Creates drainage channels in compacted soil
- Breaks up deep soil, draws up nutrients for shallow rooted plants, creates a micro-climate that attracts earthworms who then further break up and fertilize soil.

- Dandelion is one of the six biodynamic activators in herbal compost starter.
- Absorbs and transforms heavy metals like copper, zinc, manganese, lead, cadmium.
- Takes up real estate from other less useful invasive plants.
- Good food for rabbits, guinea pigs, and gerbils.
- Can be used in any form (except tincture) to help pets and livestock.
- Feeds wildlife, pollinators, and birds (do not overharvest the first flowers in spring or last flowers in fall, as pollinators and insects often rely on this food).

Dandelion is here to break the binary!

I've come to love dandelion for a lot of reasons as I've researched it this month, but one of my favourite reasons is the way dandelion blows binary thinking out of the water. Here are some examples.

Binary #1: Weed vs Medicinal Plant

We might think of plants as being either weeds or useful, but the truth is that many are both/and. Herbalism can have a problematic obsession with rare, "exotic" herbs, which leads to overharvesting, exploitation, and cultural appropriation. Learning to respect the power of our local abundant weeds is truly the antidote to that kind of thinking.



Binary #2: Food vs Medicine

Lots of people write off herbalism as silly and then turn around and eat carrots “because they’re good for your eyes”, or drink milk “because it’s good for your bones.” Guess what, that’s herbal medicine!

While the medicinal uses of dandelion are a bit different than the food uses, the difference is mostly in preparation of the plant. One of the best things we can do for our wellbeing is throw away the food/medicine binary and learn to use our food as daily health care.

Binary #3: Male vs. Female

Because of my approach to human gender (i.e. that gender is not an either/or, or even a spectrum, but an infinitely expanding universe), I love seeing examples in nature of things that aren’t inherently male or female, or that can reproduce on their own. Dandelion flowers are made up of many, many smaller flowers. They can pollenate themselves; one plant is all that’s needed to take over your precious lawn.

Migration is Beautiful!

While mentally comparing all the wonderful work that dandelion does to the ways that it’s maligned by many people, I’ve started to see a lot of overlap with how we think about human migration.

Like the lawn defenders who can't stand dandelions, some white folks in Canada (and many other places) continue to resent immigrants or refugees moving into their communities. I see these folks failing to recognize the value of diversity, failing to appreciate all the contributions that migrants do in fact make to our societies, and instead getting very stuck on their limited ideas about what their communities (or lawns), should look like. Often, instead of seeing the beauty and community-building that's right in front of them, they can only see their own opinions, which are often based on unexamined negative stereotypes.

In both cases, there's a refusal to adapt, an unhealthy desire to control things and to control other people, and a failure to recognize that there are many forces at work in the world besides our personal beliefs.

I want to be clear that the point here is not to compare migrants to weeds (weeds are, after all, just an arbitrary label that some people apply to some plants!) but to scrap the idea of weeds in the first place and recognize that diversity is beautiful and important, both in communities and in ecosystems. The problem with lawns is not that there are dandelions in them, but that someone's trying to maintain a large patch of land with only one kind of person—er, plant—growing on it.



Sources:

Primary Sources of Information:

- *Plants have so much to give us, all we have to do is ask* - Mary Geniusz
- *Backyard Medicine* - Bruton-Seal and Seal
- *The Healing Power of Herbs* - Michael Murray (1992, 1995)
- *Jekka's Complete Herb Book* - Jekka McVicar
- Richard Whelan's website (rjwhelan.co.nz)
- *Dandelion: Herbal Medicine Rooted in Your Front Yard*, Candace Hunter and Sue Sierralupe

Occasional Sources of Information:

- *The Herb Book* - John Lust
- *Indian Herbalogy of North America* - Hutchens (1970s)
- *Native Manitoba Plants of Bog, Bush and Prairie*
- *Herbs of Long Ago / Kayas Muskekeya* - Dr. Anne Anderson
- *The Complete Herbal Tutor* - Anne McIntyre (2010)
- *Wild Color* - Jenny Dean
- *Herbal Medicines (3rd ed)* - Joanna Barnes, Linda Anderson, and David Phillipson (2007)
- mountainherbs.com.au/blogs/news/dandelion-and-the-look-alikes

A Note on Indigenous Sources:

If you haven't read Mary Siisip Geniusz's book, *Plants have so much to give us, all we have to do is ask*, I really recommend it. She's a wonderful author and very knowledgeable, and she deserves so much recognition and support.

Herbs of Long Ago is a book by Dr. Anne Anderson who I believe was Metis/Cree. Her life's work included teaching and preserving the Cree language as well as preserving traditional Indigenous knowledge, such as the herbal knowledge of Kayas Muskekeya, which she documented in *Herbs of Long Ago*. If you want more information about this book, please feel free to get in touch.

I have done my best in my research to recognise Indigenous expertise, especially Anishinaabe expertise as I live on Anishinaabe land, while not claiming ownership of Indigenous traditions. White folks like myself have so much to learn, especially about having a good relationship with plants and the natural world. When learning from Indigenous folks we must learn respectfully, give credit, and take inspiration without acting as though we're entitled to Indigenous traditions and spiritual practices. If you have any feedback to offer on this, I'm open to hearing it.



This zine is the distillation of a month of research, experience and writing about one single plant. It was written and researched by Celeste Inez Mathilda and originally published by Liminal Spaces.

[LiminalSpacesShop.etsy.com](https://liminalspacesshop.etsy.com)

[Patreon.com/LiminalSpaces](https://patreon.com/LiminalSpaces)

[@liminal.spaces.shop](https://liminal.spaces.shop)

We also have a free monthly newsletter!

To subscribe, email: liminal.spaces.handmade@gmail.com

Celeste Inez Mathilda (they/them) is a printmaker, writer, musician and farmer who makes art about relating appropriately to the more-than-human world. The larger arc of their work focuses on teaching themselves as a settler, and other settlers, to be a right-sized part of our ecosystem. They are currently being stewarded by the Aspen Parkland ecosystem, in central Manitoba.



www.tangledwilderness.org
www.patreon.com/strangersinatangledwilderness