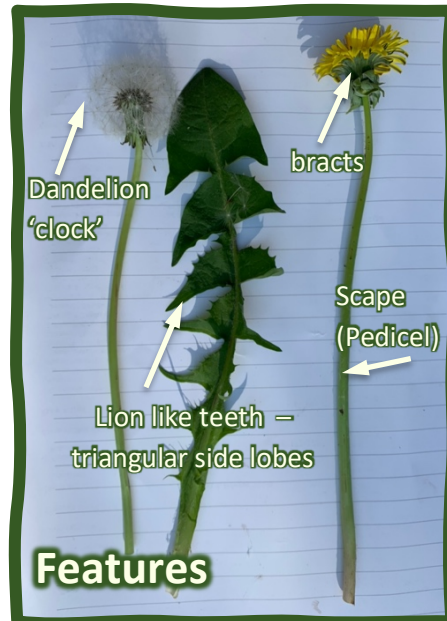


PLANT ID: dandelion

Taraxacum officinale (agg.)



Springtime

Dandelions flower profusely in April to May. However, it is not unusual to see them flowering during sunny periods in the winter... they will take any opportunity for a spot of sun-bathing!

The leaves can be found virtually all year round except in very cold months.

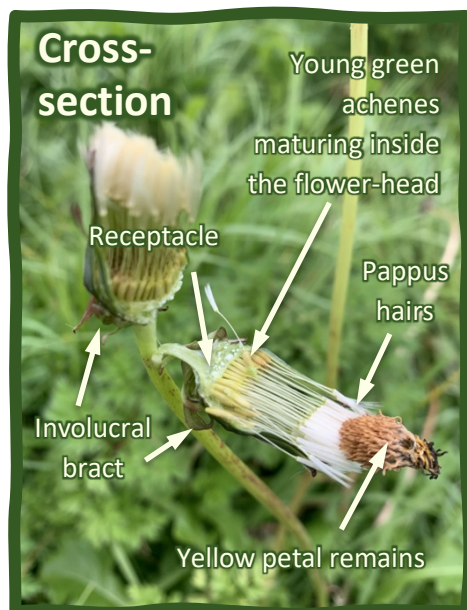
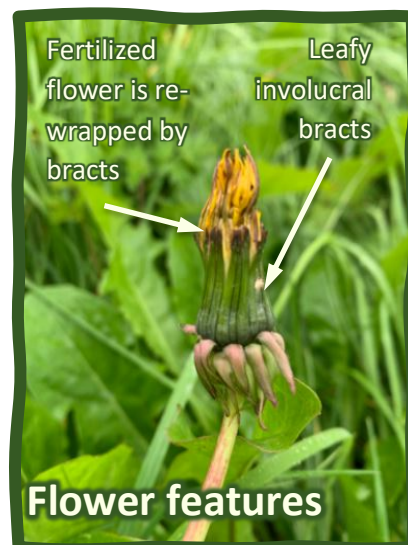


PLANT ID: dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* (agg.)

Spring into summer

Dandelion is usually a hairless perennial herb with a coffee coloured 'tap-root' that is difficult to pull-up without snapping to reveal its crisp white insides. All parts of the plant, when broken, yield a white milky latex liquid which later dries black.

Eaten to excess, dandelion can damage the liver



As each fruit matures, the beak begins to extend, while the hairs of the pappus begin to spread outwards to form the well-known dandelion 'clock'.



Clever flowers

When the flower is ready to bloom, the new flower stem (**scape**) elongates, then bends down close to the ground to allow the seeds to mature, whilst also enabling it to escape lawnmowers or grazers like sheep. When the seeds are mature, the bracts that surround the flower head open to reveal the seeds, while at the same time the flowering stem (scape) extends again, to maximise its height for effective dispersal of its wind-blown seeds.

PLANT ID: dandelion

Taraxacum officinale (agg.)

Fact File:

CURRENT STATUS: Least Concern from extinction
LOCATION: Found everywhere across U.K and Europe

Plant Description (aka Taxonomy)

They are members of the *Taraxacum* genus – a part of the daisy family – *Asteraceae*. *Taraxacum* are known for being very variable and are hence referred to as an 'aggregate' for simplicity. There are around 2000 species in Europe.



Flowers March – October, peaking in April -May
Flower Structure

About 250 rich-yellow ligulate florets tightly packed into one solitary flower head (20 – 60mm across) called a capitulum. The outer florets often have red flushing on their back. The overall flower head is then surrounded by 'palisade like' leafy involucre bracts that may be arched backwards.



Fruits from March to October.

Each achene is ribbed, beaked and topped with white hairs called Pappus. Achenes appear to be fixed (in rows) at their base to a spherical looking 'pin cushion' called a receptacle.



Leaf

Usually hairless, often shiny green above with a reddish mid-rib always growing as a basal rosette only. Leaves are very variable in size and shape, often with triangular lateral lobes.



Habitat

It has a diverse climatic and soil-type range, tending to grow in disturbed bare ground within pastures, gardens, meadows, roadsides and upon waste ground and coastal areas.



Edible:

Parts of the dandelion are edible – see the Pappus Dandelion *Playful Springboard* for recipe ideas!

ALIASES

Also known as: Wet the bed, Monk's head, Priest's crown, Blowball, Old man's clock, while the seeds are referred to as Parachutes, Sugar-eaters and Fairies.

What to look for



Best time to see it and use it

- April for a carpet of bright yellow flowers. Pick the young fresh leaves from the heart of the plant in spring for salads or cook it like spinach.
- Harvest the flowers on a sunny day for the making of wine and syrups.
- Lift the stubborn tap-root between September and March for making Dandelion beer or a coffee substitute.

Stem

The flowering stem is hollow, unbranched and leafless emerging from amongst the basal rosette of leaves.

It has a coffee coloured 'tap-root' that is difficult to pull-up without snapping to reveal its crisp white insides.

All parts of the plant, when broken yield a white milky latex liquid which later dries black.

FOOD WEB

Nectar gathered by bees
Small mammals eat the leaves and seeds.
Grazing animals eat everything.

IMPERSONATORS:

There are many similar species in this family that have yellow flowers and stems with a milky juice that might confuse you. Dandelion's basal rosette of leaves; its hairless nature and its leafless unbranched stem with a solitary flower help separate it from others in the *Asteraceae*, which are either branched, hairy or with much more robust, pimply or grass-like looking leaves. Examples include: Hawk's-beard's (*Crepis* spp.) and Hawkbit's (*Leontodon* spp.).



PLANT ID: dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* (agg.)

What's in a name? Dandelion's Latin name is from the Greek – 'disease remedy'. Its common name - 'dent de leon' - meaning 'the lion's tooth', has possibly evolved from the nature of the shape of either its immature seeds; the jagged shape of the leaves, or perhaps because the pulling of its tap-root from any lawn would be like trying to extract a lion's tooth.

Botany glossary (part 1)

Beak as each fruit matures the beak begins to extend, while the hairs of the pappus begin to spread outwards to form the well-known dandelion 'clock'.

Capitulum a name specific to *Asteraceae* to describe its inflorescence.

Achene refers to a single fruit that is small and dry

Brach leaf like feature (usually green) immediately below a flower at a point where it joins the plant stem.

Involucral bracts a collar like ruff of green leaf like features around the base of a tight head of individual flowers.

Botany glossary (part 2)

Floret a tiny flower that exists as part of a group of many other flowers collected together.

Latex milky sap produced by stems or leaves in some plants when cut.

Ligulate a feature of Daisy family flowers which are often described as strap shaped and spreading.

Pappus a ring of white hairs, sometimes feather like, that are attached to a tiny hard fruit that help with seed dispersal.

Receptacle the enlarged end of a plant stem that the flower parts are connected into.

Scape the hollow flowering stalk of a Dandelion.



Get up close to the ash by taking a virtual tour using the Pappus film library.

Oldest

Blackberry's fruits (achenes) have been found in old sedimentary rocks from the Pleiocene epoch (5 – 2.5 million years ago).

Full Plant



Global distribution

Native to the UK and Europe. Introduced and cultivated in some parts of the world.



www.GBIF.org

Kew taraxacum



Global species risk of extinction (IUCN – Red Data List)

