

Dandelion

Genus/Species *Taraxacum officinale*

Family Asteraceae

Distribution Virtually all of US

Comments This well-known plant is a familiar sign of spring and the bane of those who fastidiously maintain their lawns, and it has colonized much of the planet although a Eurasian native. It typically has a long taproot, a basal rosette of toothed leaves, leafless flower stalks, and a bright yellow petal-like corolla on each of the florets contained within the flat flower head that may be nearly 2 inches in diameter. After blooming, the flower head closes, and then reopens as the seeds mature to form the familiar “puff” awaiting dispersal by wind. This plant is capable of inhabiting a wide range of habitats and can bloom nearly throughout the year if temperatures are even marginally suitable. Besides its reputation as a lawn weed, it is used as an herbal medicine, especially as a liver tonic and a mild diuretic, and is used as a nutritious vegetable. Dandelion is a favorite source of nectar for honey bees and has been introduced for that reason. It is of much greater importance for veterinary allergy, particularly in dogs, than for human allergy.

