

# Dandelion

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## Dandelion

Scientific name: *Taraxacum officinale* (Family Asteraceae)

The dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) is a troublesome weed in bluegrass lawns throughout the transition zone. Although it is found in every southern state, it is most troublesome in the cooler regions where it persists year-round. The bright yellow flower of the dandelion appears from early spring through summer in the transition zone where it contrasts sharply with the color and texture of turfgrasses. In the Gulf States the flowering period ends in late spring.

The dandelion is frequently cited as having medicinal values. Plants are sometimes eaten raw in salads or blanched like endive and used as a green. Dandelion roots have been used medicinally as a simple bitter laxative. Chinese regard the whole plant as useful for abscesses, boils, snakebites, ulcers and other internal injuries.



## Description

The dandelion is a perennial plant with a deep, thick taproot. A rosette of basal leaves emerge from the crown of the plant. The leaves are long, narrow, deeply notched with backward pointed lobes. The leaves and flower stalk contain a milk-like juice. Flower stalks are long and slender and terminate in a single flower. The flower is 1 to 1½ inches across and consists of bright yellow to orange-yellow petals. The flower head is surrounded by narrow pointed bracts with the outer ones curved backwards. The seeds are brown, ½-inch long, narrow, with a parachute-like pappus attached to a long beak at the upper end. The dandelion flowers from April through June and seed mature and disperse quickly after the bloom appears.

## Control

Dandelions are readily controlled by 2,4-D, or products containing 2,4-D, if applications are made in fall or early spring before the plants begin to flower. After flowering begins, 2,4-D will twist and curl the leaves and flower stalks, but the plants often survive the treatment.

*Image courtesy:*

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