

Dandelion—*Taraxacum officinale* Weber¹

James M. Stephens²

Almost everyone has encountered wild dandelion as a weed pest in lawns and gardens throughout Florida and the United States. There also are cultivated varieties of this troublesome weed that make excellent cooking greens. Dandelion is grown in gardens on an infrequent basis and is produced on a rather large scale by a few commercial growers in Florida.

Description

Dandelion is a European native perennial plant whose low spreading, deeply notched leaves form a rosette pattern as they emerge from a weak central tap root. It closely resembles endive in form and in cultural requirements. The hollow flower stalks form a single compound flower of many golden colored florets. Like chicory, varieties differ in leaf shape, ranging from very curly leaved to broad leaved.



Figure 1. Dandelion
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Culture

Dandelion is a cool season, hardy vegetable. Sow seeds in the fall, winter, or early spring. A usable product of edible leaves results in about 3 months. Space plants 12 inches apart in rows that are 24 inches wide.

Use

The tops are used both in salads and as a cooking green. The root is not used as a vegetable but may have some medicinal value. Dandelion flowers are used in wine-making, according to reports.

1. This document is HS591, one of a series of the Horticultural Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date May 1994. Revised September 2015. Reviewed October 2018. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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