



DANDELION

Latin: *Taxacum officinale*

Welsh: Dant y Llew

Now regarded by gardeners as an invasive, intractable weed, the Dandelion is one of the most useful European herbs. It is a very effective medicinal plant, and all its parts (leaves, roots and flowers) can be safely used.

Its use was promoted by the Arabs in the C11th but, surprisingly, it is rarely mentioned by the ancient Greeks and Romans.

By the C16th Dandelion was widely used as a drug used by apothecaries who knew it as *Herba Taxacon* or *Herba Urinaria* a name reflecting its diuretic properties.

Nicholas Culpeper (1616-54) gave it the vulgar name *Piss-a Beds* (French: *pissenlit*) and declared that 'it openeth the passages of the urine both in young and old'.

The name Dandelion is a corruption of the French *dent de lion* (lion's tooth) a name suggested by the shape of the leaves which, with their sharply-pointed jagged edges, were seen to resemble the teeth of a lion.

The seeds of the Dandelion Clock which children love to blow away have given rise to the name *Blowball*, while the shape left at the top of the stem when all the seed have gone has prompted the name *Priest's Crown*.

Medicinal uses

Over the centuries Dandelion has been used as a diuretic, a tonic, a mild laxative, an anti-rheumatic, and in the treatment of liver complaints

The latex in the stalks and leaves has been found effective in the treatment of warts and verrucas and in the removal of corns.

Culinary uses

Leaves can be cooked as a green vegetable. Leaves and roots can be eaten in salads
Dandelion roots, chopped and roasted, have long provided a coffee substitute, and were particularly useful during the Second World War.

Dandelion flowers make a good country wine. Leaves are used in Dandelion Beer and tonic drinks.

Dyeing A yellow brown dye can be obtained from Dandelion roots.