

Chicory and Dandelions

Prior to flowering, Dandelion and Chicory leaves look very much alike. Both plants have deeply serrated leaf margins, with Chicory having the largest leaves. Later in the season, Chicory sets forth tall stems with pretty light blue stalkless flowers, while Dandelion lays low with its common yellow flowers on smooth, naked stalks. The plants are similar in that juices from the leaves and tea of the flowering Chicory and Dandelion plants are known for promoting the production of bile, the release of gallstones, and elimination of excessive internal mucus.

Both Chicory and Dandelion root can be chopped into small pieces and roasted, then used as a coffee replacement, or added to coffee to and reduce digestive disturbances and jitters from caffeine. Luzianne™ coffee is made with added chicory root to enhance its richness.



Chicory

Cichorium intybus

Chicory is a common wildflower that likes rocky soil on roadsides, but just might show up in your yard as well. If not, you can easily grow this useful plant from seed. You must get out early to see Chicory flowers as they open early and usually close by noon.

A tea made from Chicory leaves and flowers has mild laxative and sedative properties. You can brew roasted and ground chicory with coffee or on its own for a coffee like beverage to enjoy its many health benefits.

According to a study, Chicory root has a significant effect on abdominal obesity, related to the beneficial impacts of inulin on gut bacteria. A daily dose of inulin that promotes bifidobacteria growth, may improve gut function and is well tolerated by subjects with gastrointestinal complaints.

Research has shown that inulin from Chicory root may be beneficial for Type 2 diabetes mellitus, and yet another showed that Chicory roots possess anti-inflammatory activity which might be due to the inhibition of various cytokines, antioxidant effects, and their free radical scavenging activity.

A study of Chicory root extract showed protective and restructuring effects on the skin and improvement of skin barrier function. Boiled chicory leaves and flowers can be used in a poultice for external inflammations. Chicory root extract might be a good addition to homemade beauty products.

Chicory leaves can be used to produce a blue dye, and the flower petals can be eaten in salad. The vegetable Endive is a hybrid of our wild chicory, grown in dark conditions to prevent the development of chlorophyll.



Dandelion

Taraxacum officinale

This sunny flower is much maligned as a weed but almost every part of this highly nutritious plant can be used for food or medicine.

Dandelion is used in teas and tinctures as a detoxifying tonic for the blood, liver, and gall bladder, and to ease minor digestive problems.

Dandelion leaf tea is considered a diuretic, but as it is high in potassium, it does not deplete potassium levels like medications tend to do. An infusion of Dandelion flowers was used by the Cherokee “to make a woman stronger after childbirth.”

Laboratory studies have shown dandelion to have anti-cancer properties, but clinical studies have not confirmed this effect in humans.

Dandelion can be made into a salve for the same conditions as Chicory. It is said that the sap from Dandelion stems can be used to fade age spots and remove warts. Avoid the stems if you are allergic to latex.

Dandelion leaves and flowering crowns are considered by some to be a spring delicacy and tonic food. The flowers can be dipped in batter and made into fritters. Some people enjoy a wine made from Dandelion flowers.

“How empathic it is” A sun in the grass!” Thoreau

Children enjoy Dandelions immensely and there is hardly a better plant to use to introduce them to Nature’s wonders. Maybe it will even encourage them to try some cooked Dandelion greens, which are very high in Vitamin C, A, and potassium. Holding a flower under a friend’s chin somehow reflects yellow, and that in folklore means that they love butter. Kids love to blow the seeds in the wind, this is done to “make a wish.” If you split Dandelion stems and dip them in water, they will make Curly Q’s.

Excessive amounts of Dandelion were shown in a study to reduce male fertility in mice. So, guys, limit consumption of Dandelion if you want to father a child or boost your libido.

- A liquid plant food is made from Dandelion root and leaves.
- A dark red dye is obtained from Dandelion root.
- A cosmetic skin lotion made from the appendages at the base of the leaf blades distilled in water, is used to clear the skin and is effective in fading freckles.
- When placed in a paper bag with unripe fruit, the flowers and leaves of Dandelion release ethylene gas ripening the fruit quickly.