

No Mow May

Spring is finally in full swing and everything is starting to grow again. Including Dandelions, quite possibly the most controversial plant you can find in your yard. While some people consider them a nuisance to be removed others see them as a beneficial harbinger of spring.



Incredibly important for new Queen Bees as they search for a home in early spring. Awake and ready to make a colony of their own, they rely on early blooming plants, especially Dandelions as they are rich in nectar and so bountiful this time of year. Queen Bees aren't the only ones looking for the nutritious little suns, all newly awakened insects that feed on nectar benefit from the early blooms found on Dandelions. Including migrating Butterflies, Humming Bird Moths, Hoverflies, and other creatures like Birds and Rabbits. While the beneficial insects feed they also distribute pollen to other early blooms such as Tulips, Hyacinths and Daffodils.

The North American Goldfinch can often be found plucking seeds from spent Dandelion blooms. Many other song birds pick from them as well, although I have not noticed others quite as interested as the North American Goldfinch, they seem to have a preference for the fluffy little floaties.



While a food source for many, they also contribute to soil health. Thick tap roots penetrate the heaviest of soils loosening compaction. As one of the first plants to colonize bare soil they can slow and control soil erosion with deeply anchored tap roots and multiple smaller roots that spread into the surrounding soil. Air spaces left behind after roots have decomposed fill with water and release it gradually, improving water retention and drainage.

Not only are they an important link in the natural food web, They contain many health benefits and have been used in traditional medicine for years. Rich in antioxidants, vitamins and minerals many people have incorporated them into their daily diet. Believed to be a diuretic they can contribute to a healthier liver as well as a healthier heart with reports of anti-inflammatory properties that can aid in blood flow and circulation. Always consult a medical professional before using any plant or herb in a medicinal/supplemental manner.

All parts of the Dandelion are edible and can be eaten in different ways. The leaves are good raw in salads or cooked as greens. The bright yellow blooms can be made into wine or honey and the roots are roasted and can be used as a more nutritious coffee substitute.



Taraxacum officinale Web

Obviously those with allergies to Dandelions should not engage and have someone else remove them from their property for safety purposes, but those who are not allergic should consider taking advantage of the many health benefits.

It also goes without saying that the price of gas is a good motivator as well, think about how much money you could save for the month of May by not mowing??

Ways to help:

- Mow half of your lawn at a time
- Mow the front lawn and leave the back yard
- Set your mower blades higher to allow the shorter blooms to remain
- Leave a 1-2 foot border near the tree line un-mowed (to be mowed later on when dandelions are finished)
- Trim around clusters of Dandelion plants
- Mow pathways through the lawn
- Get creative and make a maze!

However you decide to trim your lawn this May just remember that the Dandelions are our friends and others rely on them this time of year. It can be difficult to leave the grass wild but the benefits are greater than you can imagine and although you may not be able to actively see those benefits they are still there and will continue to help all summer long, even after the lawn has been cut in June.

Sources:

<https://tse2.mm.bing.net/th/id/OIP.HL1ntOlaYD8fZigGXhO6cgHaLR?rs=1&pid=ImgDetMain&o=7&rm=3>

[Why Are Dandelions Good for the Environment? - The Institute for Environmental Research and Education](#)

[Dandelion Benefits Biodiversity, Soil and Your Health – Mother Earth News](#)

[Top 10 Health Benefits Of Dandelion And Delicious Recipes](#)