

ישן ארי – Dandelion – *Taraxacum Officinale*

Liver Cleansing Herb and the Month of Tevet

Dandelion grows in most parts of the world, almost all year round. The other day, I noticed one in the crevice of the natural steps my husband made as a shortcut through the garden. Out of all its wonderful health benefits, dandelion is best known for its ability to treat liver disorders.

The root of the plant contains most of the bitter principles that helps to build up liver tissue, which makes it useful in the treatment of hepatitis, gallstones, and chronic liver congestion. Dandelion stimulates and improves liver function by removing toxins and reestablishing hydration and electrolyte balance. It also increases the release of bile and maintains the proper flow of bile. Dandelion's antioxidants such as vitamin C, keep the liver functioning optimally and protect it from aging. Since the month of Tevet is associated with the liver, it is the perfect time to work on healing the liver by delving into the mystical and medicinal properties of dandelion. Similar to Chinese medicine, the Torah links the liver with anger and agitation: "The liver gets angry; the gall bladder injects a drop into it and calms it down" (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 61b*). Just as the Talmud associates the month of Tevet with anger and the liver, in Kabbalah the sense of the month of Tevet is 'agitation' and its organ is the liver:



"He made the letter Ayin king over agitation, And He bound a crown to it and with it He formed Capricorn in the Universe and Tevet in the year, and the liver in the soul male and female" (*Sefer Yetzirah Chapter 5*).

Anger and resentment, often trapped in the liver, can lead to [depression and self-hatred that elevate the liver enzymes](#) if not relieved. Most of the herbs that act on the liver can help with this problem, but dandelion can be particularly effective. While working on healing the liver, repressed anger may surface. Dealing with the anger, which also manifests as agitation and irritation, is vital for restoring optimal liver function.

The Bitter Principle of Dandelion Sweetens Bitter Emotions

Dandelion is one of the plants that people don't usually think about except when mowing the lawn. It is invasive and pervasive, yet excellent for food and medicine. This teaches us that even little irritating things often have tremendous value. There is a humbling unpretentiousness about this enchanted flower, which blooms longer than most other plants. It represents staying power with a grounding and centering influence that connects to the solar plexus energy center. Dandelion helps to ground scattered emotions and strengthens the emotional body, giving us a stronger sense of self. The solar plexus is the source of connection between ourselves and other people. It may cause irrational instant likes or dislikes of people.. Since dandelion root is a digestive bitter, it helps sweeten the judgment of bitterness and releases hostility trapped in the liver. The bitter action on the liver helps reduce excessive activity that we use to run away from unpleasant emotions.

Balancing the Tension of Overachievers

Dandelion flowers help people who cram too much into their lives – the compulsive 'doers' who over plan and over structure their lives – leaving insufficient time for reflection and relaxation. Having pushed themselves beyond their capacity, without leaving space in their lives for emotional or spiritual expression, they forget how to listen to the needs of their own body. Dandelion may ease

their shoulder and neck tension, caused by restraint of their inner selves, by allowing emotions to be expressed, rather than trapped in the muscles. It helps us to shift from being a 'human doing' to a 'human being,' balancing our energy and excessive activity to bring a sense of inner ease and relaxation. Thus, dandelion balances and restores emotions to a more even keel. Try meditating while holding a single dandelion on your solar plexus to facilitate will, bravery, and a healthy, positive outlook.

Dandelion Reviving Your Inner Child

The bright yellow dandelion symbolizes happiness, simple joys and our inner child who often forgets to play. It is impossible not to notice this cheerful flower that smiles at us when opening, engendering the energy of pure delight. It brings a smile to our faces and youthful thoughts of taking off our shoes, running and playing with the flowers. Dreaming of dandelions is supposed to be especially good for relationships. As a child, I remember blowing the fluffy flower seeds and making a wish, which could come true in ways we hadn't anticipated. We would count the seeds remaining on the stalk to 'predict' how many years before getting married, and how many children we would bear. Dandelion still reminds us that our prayers have power, yet they also come with responsibility. There is a folktale comparing the rose – who desired to live in a castle garden – where she could be safe by climbing on the walls and the dandelion – who was happy to live anywhere children could find her. Since it chose to live in open fields and by the roadsides – anywhere she could bring a smile – dandelion was blessed with a long growing season and designated to become a child's flower.

Balancing Opposite Polarities and Increasing Psychic Powers

Dandelion opens its petals in the morning to greet the sun and closes them at night to sleep. Due to the contrasting colors of the golden flower and puffy white seeds, it is associated with the opposite polarities of the sun and the moon. The medicinal uses of the plant as a kidney and liver tonic indicate its ability to restore balance. Dandelion can also be used to restore internal mental and emotional balance. Dandelion tea may increase psychic abilities because of its cleansing and rejuvenating properties, and because it is connected to the element of air. Associated with rebirth and immortality, dandelion leaf brings about purification and defeats negativity. Culpepper writes that dandelion has an "opening and cleansing quality... it opens passages." Drinking either dried dandelion root tea or flower infusion is supposed to enhance the gift of second sight.

Expect the Unexpected & Follow the Wind

"Expect the unexpected" is one of dandelion's messages. This plant is also quite a traveler – sending its seeds as much as five miles from the originating plant. You can learn from the dandelion when you are looking to cut apron strings and take to the road, following where the wind leads you. A simple puff of wind or blowing on it takes those hundreds of seeds with your desire to all corners of creation.

Medicinal Properties of Dandelion

The energetics of dandelion is bitter, sweet, and cool. It affects the spleen, stomach, kidney and liver. In addition to regulating bile production, promoting liver and kidney health, it is also a remedy for digestive disturbances, diabetes, urinary disorders, skin problems, acne, jaundice, cancer, and anemia. In addition, it helps maintain bone health, skin, vision and weight loss. Finally, as an antioxidant and disinfectant, dandelions fight viral infections as well. Rambam calls it 'the donkey's lettuce.' In Israel, dandelion grows amongst the residential weeds in the Judean hills, Samaria and Galilee.

Preventing 83 Kinds of Illnesses by Protecting the Gallbladder

In traditional Chinese medicine, the gallbladder is the liver's partner organ and vessel. The gallbladder is called מרה/*marah* – 'bitter' in Hebrew. This is a fitting name since the gallbladder, collects and stores bile, which is the bitter fluid produced by the liver. According to the Talmud, health and illness is dependent on the gallbladder:

והסירותי מחלה מקרבך ותניא מחלה זו מרה ולמה נקרא שמה מחלה ששמונים ושלושה חלאין יש בה מחלה
בגימטריא (תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא קמא דף צב/ב)

"I will remove מַחְלָה/*machalah* – 'sickness' from your midst" (*Shemot* 23:25). It was taught: *Machalah* means gall; why is it called machalah? Because eighty-three different kinds of illnesses may result from it [as the numerical value of machalah amounts exactly to this] (*Babylonian Talmud Baba Kama* 92b).

Dandelion is very beneficial for the gallbladder and liver because it improves their general functioning, protects them from the ill effects of oxidants and infections, and regulates the various secretions from both organs. In this way, dandelion may prevent 83 kinds of illnesses.

Culinary Uses

You can eat every single part of a dandelion. When you want to internalize a little nature, nibble on the dandelion and enjoy its endurance. There are lots of flowers that look like dandelion but aren't! If the leaves are branched, if there is more than one flower on the stem or if the plant is at all hairy, you're not looking at a dandelion! Don't eat it unless you're absolutely sure.

Dandelion Flowers can be added to salads or juiced and used to make jelly, wine and punch. The flowers are supposedly useful when eaten fresh to relieve headaches. Pick the flowers during the day when they are open, as they are very bitter when closed.

Dandelion Leaves

The young leaves can be used raw or blanched in salads or sandwiches, steamed like spinach or cooked into soup or broth. You can make Dandelion Beer from the fermented dried leaves. The leaves can also be dried and stored for the winter or blanched and frozen. The leaves contain 7000 units of Vitamin A per ounce, and are an excellent source of Vitamins B, C and some vitamin D. As a comparison, the Vitamin A content of lettuce is 1,200 per ounce and carrot 1,275 per ounce. This flowering plant is also rich in fiber, potassium, iron, calcium, magnesium, zinc, and phosphorus. Dandelion also contains more protein than spinach.

Dandelion Root

The root can be dried and used in soups or made into tea or coffee. Fresh roots can also be used in salads.

Dandelion Coffee

You can use ground and roasted dandelion roots as a coffee substitute. This drink will help digestion and strengthen the liver and kidneys, without influencing the nerves like coffee and regular tea. Uproot the roots of 2-year-old plants. Wash them well and dry them in the sun or in the oven at 100 degrees with the door slightly open. Grind the roots and roast them carefully on a pan without oil, until it gets a little brown. Make sure the fire is low in order not to burn the roots. Chassidim of natural food claim that dandelion coffee tastes much better than regular coffee and obviously, is much healthier.

Hands On:

Dandelions can also be used as a vegetable and are a good source of fiber. It promotes digestion, and in the past, it was used to treat scurvy because of its high levels of vitamin C.

Steamed Dandelion Greens with Red Pepper & Garlic

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 large onions chopped
- ¼ cup thinly sliced garlic (5 or 6 cloves)
- 1-2 red peppers sliced in long thin strips
- ½ teaspoon hot red pepper, or to taste
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 cups dandelion greens with stems, well washed and roughly chopped
- ½ vegetable stock or water
- Lemon wedges for serving

1. Place the olive oil in a large, deep saucepan with a lid over medium-high heat. When hot, add the chopped onion and sauté until translucent.
2. Add the sliced garlic and red peppers, hot pepper, salt and black pepper and continue to sauté for about 1 minute.
3. Add the greens and stock. Cover and cook until the greens are wilted and just tender but still a little firm, about 5 minutes.
4. Uncover the pan and continue to cook, stirring, until the liquid almost evaporates and the greens are quite tender, at least 5 minutes more.
5. Serve hot, or cold, with lemon wedges.