

# Handy Dandy Dandelions

**If you can't  
beat 'em,  
eat 'em!**

*The British so cherish  
this dainty plant that  
they've had it declared an  
endangered wildflower.  
And for good reason...*

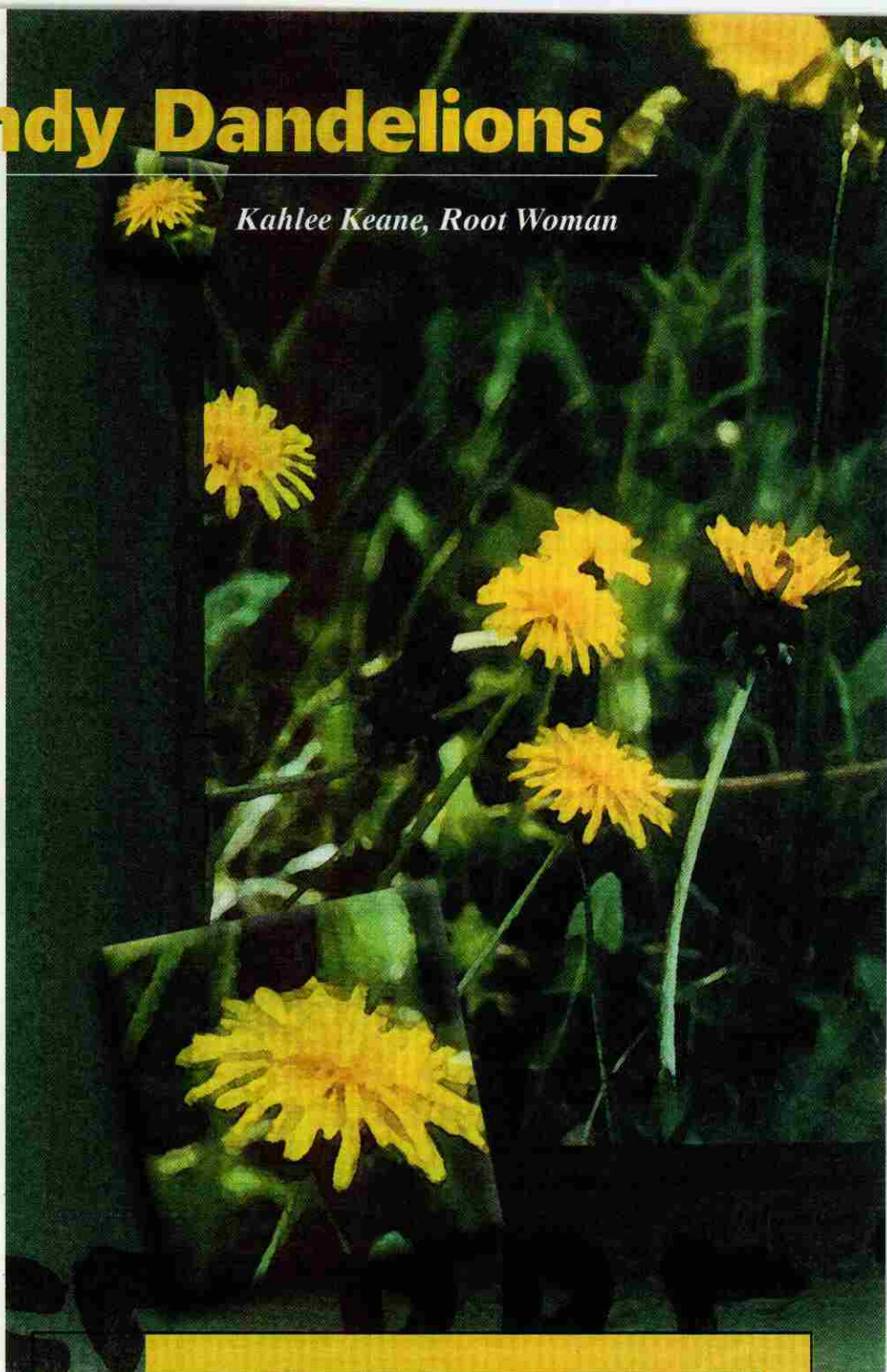
**W**ho is not familiar with dandelion's rosette of jagged leaves sprouting up from a deep tap root and its bright yellow flower head made up of hundreds of tiny florets? As children, we blew the small parachute seeds to watch them float away on the breeze. Yet, how much do we really know about this all too familiar plant?

An organic herb farm I visited a couple of summers back grew dandelions here and there among their fruit trees. This was not only aesthetically pleasing but profitable. The greens and roots were marketed at a good profit, and as a bonus, an ethylene gas exhaled by the blossoms after the heat of the day increased yields and ripened the orchard fruit prematurely. A dandelion double whammy!

The National Research Council's monograph on dandelion states that the annual value of dandelion sold in Canadian markets exceeds half a million dollars. But whether you wildcraft dandelions, grow them in your garden, or cultivate them large scale, you will find the early leaf is delicious and nutritionally high in calcium, magnesium, potassium, iron and vitamins A and C. The older leaves are a bitter that assist digestion and are quite edible steamed or stir-fried with other vegetables.

As a spring tonic, dandelion leaf is unsurpassed. It cleanses and fortifies the liver and nourishes the whole body with its rich store of calcium, potassium and

*Kahlee Keane, Root Woman*



## **Non-Caffeinated Coffee Substitute**

Spring dandelion roots are best for making this beverage. Dig them before the aerial portion of the plant develops. Scrub the root clean, split lengthways and steam for five minutes or so to congeal the root sap. Cool and chop into small pieces and place in a 300 F (150 C) oven with the door slightly ajar to allow moisture to evaporate. When they are a nice chocolate brown and crackling dry, remove and cool. To make your beverage, grind in a coffee grinder and use one teaspoon (5 ml) per cup (250 ml) of boiling water. Delicious and good for you, too!

## The Mighty Dandelion

**Wild Plant:** *Taraxacum spp.*

**Family:** *Compositae*

**Habitat:** Easily found in pastures, meadows, gardens, waste grounds and roadsides.

**Part Used:** Leaves and root.

**Ethical Wildcrafting:** Gather the early spring leaf in unpolluted areas. The root may be dug in spring and fall. When digging the root, do not distribute the seeds. Although dandelion does not usually infiltrate native plant colonies (it prefers your lawn), you may inadvertently introduce it to pristine areas where pure, native plant colonies thrive.

**Physiological Action:** Diuretic (stimulates urination). Bitter tonic (increases the tone of the gastric mucosa and stimulates digestion). Mild laxative (stimulates bowel evacuation). Cholagogue (stimulates bile flow from the gall bladder). Choloretic (stimulates production of bile in the liver).

**Active Constituents:** Bitter resin (taraxacerine), up to 30 per cent inulin, phytosterols, saponins and flavonoids.

**Note:** The milk juice (latex) in the stem and root may cause contact dermatitis in some people. Dandelion is contraindicated in bile duct obstruction, acute gall bladder inflammation, acute gastrointestinal inflammation and intestinal blockage.

iron. A tea made from the leaf is one of the finest diuretics known—nourishing the kidneys and reducing fluid retention without the harmful side-effects associated with potassium depletion.

The root, prepared properly (see recipe), is a tasty general beverage and an excellent coffee substitute especially for those trying to reduce their caffeine intake.

The sticky, milky sap found in dandelion's stem and root contains antifungal properties. You can boil them fresh to make an external wash for athlete's foot or other fungal problems. The root, dug in the fall, has a very high inulin content helpful to diabetics. Inulin stabilizes blood sugar, is diuretic and possesses immunos-

timulating properties. It is not absorbed in the stomach but acts as a stimulant to healthy bacteria in the large intestine.

European researchers have found that root extracts reduce the clumping of human blood platelets in blood vessels. This is a common complication in hardening of the arteries and diabetes. It also helps decrease high blood pressure, thus aiding the action of the heart.

Overall, the much-maligned dandelion is a storehouse of nutritious and medicinal virtues—good for you, and the soil, too. ■

*Kahlee Keane, Root Woman is a Saskatchewan eco-herbalist and educator with a deep interest in the protection of wild plants. Contact her through her Web site <connect.to/rootwoman>.*

**Tastes Great!**

**Cal-Mag  
FIZZ™**



**New Effervescent Blend  
Dissolves In Cold Water With NO Mixing.**

The best tasting,  
most absorbable form of  
Calcium and Magnesium available —  
**plus** vitamin D, a vitamin B  
complex and select trace minerals.

**Exclusively Distributed By**



**1-800-261-4223**