



Friends of NCTC Program Activity
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That's A Dandy Lion (ages 5 and older)

Background

Dandelions are one of the first flowers that appear in yards in the spring. They are important to bees as one of the first ways they can collect pollen (for food) and important to us because we need bees to pollinate plants. Without plants, we don't have food!

What You Will Need for This Project

- Q-tip, white acrylic paint, colored paper (construction paper or cover stock is best)
- Dandelion flowers, sugar or honey, lemons or lemon juice, water, gallon container, strainer
- Dandelion flowers and leaves, white cloth (pillowcase, handkerchief, plain bandana, etc), newspaper, wax paper, hammer

What to Do

Learn About Dandelions Read these statements about dandelions and decide which ones are True! Challenge your friends and family to make it a game. (The answers are in the Adult Section at the end.)

T/F Dandelion seeds can travel 5 miles in the air before reaching the ground

T/F Dandelions are actually flowers, not weeds

T/F Dandelions can be eaten.

T/F Every part of the dandelion is edible

T/F Dandelions are good for your lawn because they help fertilize the grass

T/F Dandelions are one of the first flowers that you see in the spring and that makes them very important source of nectar for pollinators like bees and butterflies

T/F The name Dandelion comes from the French *dent-de-lion*, meaning 'lion's tooth'

T/F What we call the Dandelion flower is called a floret and is made up of tiny little flowers. Go look closely!

T/F Dandelion flowers open in the daytime and close up at night

T/F Dandelion stems are hollow but has a waxy milky latex sap in it

T/F Dandelions flowers come back year after year (they don't really die in the cold weather)

T/F You can eat Dandelion greens in a salad or cook them for a good source of vitamins

T/F Dandelion wine is made from the flowers

T/F You can make a yellow dye from the Dandelion flowers

T/F White Sulphur Springs WV (home of the Greenbrier Hotel) had a Dandelion Festival

Paint a Dandelion! You can make a dandelion picture using a Q-tip as a brush and white paint. Dip the Q-tip in the paint and dab it on colored paper to make a fuzzy ball. Darker paper (cover stock or construction paper) will help your art show up better.

Make Dandelion Lemonade: 4 cups fresh dandelion flowers (without pesticides), 1-2 cups sugar or honey, 4 lemons (or 12T bottled lemon juice). Makes 1 gallon. Place the dandelions in a strainer and rinse them to remove any dirt or small insects. Fill a gallon container with water and add the juice of 4 lemons and 1-2 cups of sugar. Mix well. You can also substitute honey for some or all of the sugar. Place the dandelions in the top of the container and let sit for a couple of hours before serving. You can strain the dandelions out before serving or leave them in the lemonade for garnish. For a stronger dandelion flavor, boil them in 4 cups of water and let sit

an hour. Strain, and fill up gallon with additional water needed.

<https://creativehomemaking.com/recipes/drinks/dandelion-lemonade/>

Pounded Flower Prints

A first step in exploring the mystery of plant pigments is to transfer them directly to fabric, creating decorative patterns to adorn napkins, pillowcases, or to make prints for framing. Have kids predict what colors their prints will be, explain their thinking, and then compare and discuss the results.

1. If using new napkins or pillowcases, wash them first to remove sizing. If students are making a print to be framed, cut fabric 1 inch larger than frame size so they can wrap the fabric around a piece of cardboard in the frame.
2. Cut flowers from stems, leaving a little bit of stem attached.
3. Choose a workspace that can be safely pounded with a hammer, such as the floor or a sturdy worktable. Cover the surface with thick protective layer of newspaper, and place wax paper on top to keep the newsprint from being transferred to the fabric. Lay fabric on top of the wax paper. Have kids practice on scrap fabric first to see the effects of different flowers.
4. Invite students to experiment with designs. They should place flowers and leaves face down on the fabric and place sheet of wax paper over the entire design.
5. With safety goggles on, students can hammer through the wax paper to transfer the flower pigment onto the fabric. Make sure they pound along the margins to define the shape. Thick flowers require more pounding.
6. Remove wax paper and check the fabric. Students may want to add more flowers and continue the process until they are pleased with the results. For a print to be framed, leave the small flower pieces that adhere to the fabric. For napkins and pillowcases, remove the residue.
7. Wash napkins and pillowcases in cold water and iron them. (Flower prints may fade when washed in hot water.) For a framed print, iron the fabric, then wrap the border of the fabric around the thin piece of cardboard that comes with the frame (or provide your own). Tape fabric to cardboard and place it in the frame. <https://kidsgardening.org/resources/lesson-plans-exploring-plant-dyes/>

Make A Wish! Don't forget! When you see a mature dandelion ball, blow the seeds and make a wish.

Helpful Hints for Adults (books to read, other websites, links)

Answers to Learn About Dandelions. (All statements are true.)

Dandelion seeds can travel 5 miles in the air before reaching the ground

They are actually flowers, not weeds

They are highly nutritious plant and are loaded with vitamins and minerals

Every part of the dandelion is edible

They are good for your lawn because they help fertilize the grass

They are one of the first flowers that you see in the spring and that makes them very important source of nectar for pollinators like bees and butterflies

The name comes from the French *dent-de-lion*, meaning 'lion's tooth'

What we call the flower is actually called a floret and is made up of tiny little flowers

The flowers open in the daytime and close up at night

The stem is hollow but has a waxy milky latex sap in it

It's a perennal flower so it comes back year after year (doesn't die in the fall, just settles in for the winter)

You can eat the greens in a salad or cook them for a good source of vitamin A, C, K. They can be bitter so many people blanch them first in a little bit of water

Dandelion wine is made from the flowers

You can make a yellow dye from the flowers

White Sulphur Springs WV (home of the Greenbrier Hotel) had a Dandelion Festival each year

<https://festivalnet.com/11504/White-Sulphur-Springs-West-Virginia/Festivals/West-Virginia-Dandelion-Festival>

Dandelion Play Dough instructions can be found here <https://allnaturaladventures.com/fun-dandelion-facts-for-kids/>