

Dandelion in Humoral Medicine: Its Varieties, Names, Properties, and Benefits

We use in treatment the true dandelion described in the books of Humoral Medicine, identified by the characteristics of its leaves and flowers and commonly used in the Levant and India. Its seeds are well known in both regions and are called *Tukhm Kasni* (Kasni seed) in Hindi, meaning dandelion seed. This is the seed traditionally used medicinally in India and by us in our treatments.

Some people may find its descriptions confusing because there are cultivated varieties and wild varieties. Others may mistakenly think that it is the same as *al-baqlah al-hamqā'* (purslane), which it is not. This confusion arises from differences in names and the countries in which it is cultivated. Ibn al-Bayṭār, Al-Mu'tamad, and Al-Anṭākī treated *al-baqlah al-hamqā'* as a separate plant, describing its characteristics and actions independently.

Dandelion has both ancient and modern names. We rely on the descriptions found in classical medicine because we follow the principles of Humoral Medicine and classify herbs according to that methodology. We do not confuse ancient and modern plant names.

Modern names that may refer to dandelion include:

- Wild dandelion, *Taraxacum* (dandelion)
- Wild dandelion, lion's tooth (*dandelion*)
- Blessed herb, foolish herb, herb, and dandelion (*chicory*, *endive*)
- Hindaba, Hindab, Hindaba (*Cichorium*, *endive*)
- Wild dandelion, ريس, dandelion, chicory (*Chicory*)
- Endive dandelion (*Cichorium endivia*)
- Wild dandelion (*Cichorium intybus*)
- Curled endive
- Broad-leaved endive

Names of Dandelion in Classical Medicine

The broad-leaved Syrian and Hashemite dandelion was called *Antonia* and corresponds to the cultivated variety, as mentioned by Ibn al-Bayṭār.

Tarakhshaqūq and *Tarshaqūq* refer to the wild dandelion and were also called *Būqūlus*, *Fanjūriyūn*, and *Al-Amīrūn*.

Al-Yaʿdīd, called *Khandarīlī* in Greek, was also referred to as wild dandelion because of its close resemblance in leaves, flowers, seeds, and overall appearance. However, its bitterness is stronger than that of wild dandelion.

Al-Ya‘ḍīd and *Talfāf* were called *Baqlah Dashtī* by Ibn al-Bayṭār, though Al-Ya‘ḍīd is a type of wild dandelion while Talfāf is not.

As for the claim that the “Blessed Herb” is dandelion, Ibn al-Bayṭār stated that it is more accurately identified as purslane.

Likewise, the claim that the “Jewish Herb” is Talfāf, a type of wild dandelion, is incorrect. Ibn al-Bayṭār identified it instead as *Al-Qirṣa‘nah*.

As for *Al-Murūriyyah*, some identified it as Al-Ya‘ḍīd, while Al-Rāzī in *Al-Hāwī* described it as a type of lettuce with bitterness and a milky sap.

Description of Wild and Cultivated Dandelion According to Humoral Medicine

Cultivated Dandelion

There are two varieties:

1. A long-leaved variety with sky-blue flowers tinged with red and an unpleasant taste, especially at the end of summer.
2. A broad-leaved variety with white flowers and a mild taste lacking bitterness, especially in spring. It is known as the Syrian and Hashemite dandelion.

Wild Dandelion

There are also two varieties:

1. A long-leaved variety with sky-blue flowers and intense bitterness.
2. A yellow-flowered variety with abundant blossoms and mild bitterness. Its leaves resemble those of the white-flowered cultivated variety but are more hairy.

Therapeutic Actions of Cultivated and Wild Dandelion

Ibn al-Bayṭār and Al-Muʿtamad reported that all cultivated and wild varieties of dandelion, as well as similar plants, possess many beneficial medicinal properties. They are cooling and beneficial for the stomach. When eaten, they help with weakness of the stomach and heart.

Dandelion is considered cold and dry in the first degree. It strengthens the stomach, opens obstructions of the liver and spleen, reduces excessive heat in the blood and yellow bile, and cleanses the stomach.

Al-Rāzī wrote in *Dafʿ Maḍār al-Aghdhiyah* that dandelion benefits inflamed livers and stomachs. Although it cools and moistens, it is not as cooling or thirst-relieving as lettuce. It benefits both hot and cold liver ailments but is not suitable for those suffering from coughs or individuals with cold

constitutions. Like many cooling vegetables, it can produce bloating.

Dandelion opens liver obstructions and cleanses the urinary passages.

Al-Isrā'īlī stated that if its juice is extracted, boiled, skimmed, and taken with oxymel (*sikanjabin*), it opens obstructions, removes foul humors, and benefits recurrent fevers.

Ḥubaysh reported that dandelion changes when exposed to air, becoming coarse when heated and increasingly bitter. It is mildly warm and close to a balanced temperament. Its boiled and clarified juice helps tumors, strengthens the stomach, and opens obstructions.

Al-Baṣrī stated that Syrian dandelion (*Antonia*) is cold and moist in the first degree and is especially beneficial for hot liver temperaments. Unlike many cold vegetables, it does not significantly harm colder constitutions and is beneficial in quartan fevers and cold fevers.

Al-Ṭabarī stated that wild dandelion is called *Tarakhshaqūq* and is known in Persian as *Talakh*.

Ishāq ibn 'Imrān described it as having leaves resembling small cultivated dandelion leaves, with slender stems about two spans long and small sky-blue flowers that produce fine seeds.

Galen wrote that its temperament is predominantly mildly cold with bitterness. These qualities provide moderate astringency, making it one of the best remedies for disorders associated with a hot liver temperament.

Al-Ṭabarī noted that wild dandelion resembles cultivated dandelion but is stronger and less cold. Its seeds possess similar medicinal properties. The water of its leaves may be used as an eye wash for night blindness. Its leaves are included in antidotal compounds and may benefit fevers, especially in those who drink little water.

Ishāq ibn ʿImrān stated that it benefits spitting of blood, relieves thirst, stimulates appetite, opens obstructions, helps quartan fever and dropsy, and strengthens the heart when taken internally or applied externally. Its expressed juice, especially when mixed with oil and sipped, was said to counteract even deadly poisons.

According to *Al-Tajribatayn*, it benefits dropsy caused by hot swelling of the liver, reduces blood agitation, helps continuous fevers, and its medicinal preparations vary in strength according to concentration. Its seeds have effects similar to the expressed juice but are somewhat weaker.

Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*)

Several modern references indicate that chicory, a type of dandelion, has anti-hepatotoxic (liver-protective) properties:

- *Curative Potential of Kashni (Cichorium intybus Linn.)*, Pharmacologyonline, 2010, pp. 971–978.
- *Ameliorating Effect of Chicory (Cichorium intybus L.)*, Food & Chemical Toxicology, 2010.
- *Anti-Hepatotoxic Activity of Cichotyboside*, Journal of Asian Natural Products Research, 2008.
- *Anti-Hepatotoxic Effects of Root and Root Callus Extracts of Cichorium intybus*, 1998.

Note

Chicory, a type of dandelion distinguished by its blue flowers and characteristic features, was described by classical physicians as beneficial for constipation and disorders of the liver, gallbladder, and stomach.

Modern researchers have also reported potential benefits relating to liver health, skin inflammation, appetite loss, and cancer-related research.