

— BIODIVERSITY — on your Farm

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has set a challenge for farmers to record some of the amazing biodiversity found on your farm during the year. We have 40 species for you to record.

Are you up for the challenge?

Species: Dandelion

Scientific Name: *Taraxacum* agg.

Irish name: Caisearbhán

Group

1 of the 367 plant species belonging to the Asteraceae family.

Irish Wildflowers at

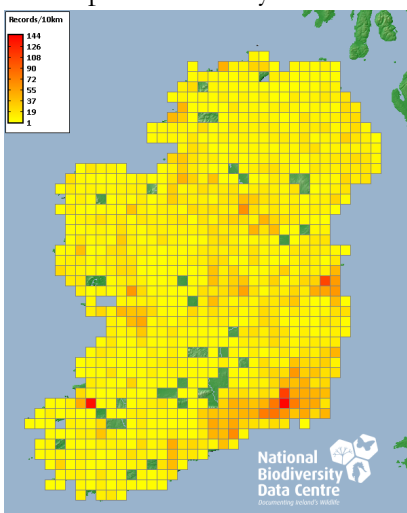
http://www.wildflowersofireland.net/plant_detail.php?id_flower=86#glos

How common on farms

Biodiversity surveys were carried out across 40 farms within the National Biodiversity Data Centre’s ‘Protecting Farmland Pollinators’ EIP project (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/projects/protecting-farmland-pollinators/>). The 40 farms were chosen to reflect farms of differing types and intensity levels. Dandelion was recorded on thirty two of the 40 farms.

Distribution

Widespread and very common.



Source: The Dandelion records as viewed on Biodiversity Maps, 2023



© Ruth Wilson
Dandelion can be confused with other yellow flowers, they're the only one with a hollow stem.

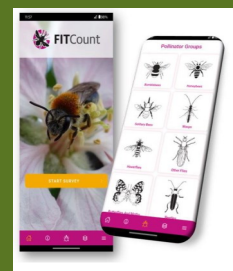
Identification Tips

- Flowerheads, usually yellow, with closely packed florets (150-200 tiny flowers) on a single hollow stem.
- Only Dandelion has a hollow stem, it also has latex sap if cut or bruised.
- Leaves have a pointed toothlike edge, which is where their common name comes from, “*Dent-de-lion*”– French for “lion’s tooth”.
- When they fruit, the seeds appear with their downy, white parachutes, and form a globular, packed seed head, also known as the ‘clock’.

Biodiversity Tip No. 6 Try a Flower-Insect Timed (FIT) Count

Simply watch a patch of flowers for 10 minutes and count how many insects visit. It’s a useful tool to measure the change in biodiversity, after taking action for pollinators on your farm

<https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/fit-counts/>



Conservation Status

Red Lists are an internationally recognised methodology for assessing conservation status. An Irish Vascular Plant Red List was published in 2016. It found that the Dandelion was not threatened with extinction from the island of Ireland. Based on the Red List it is 'Least Concern'.

Management Tips

For Dandelion:

Around the farm:

- Allow patches to flower and set seed, where possible.

Further Info

Over 100 different pollinator species have been recorded using Dandelions, it is also the larval food plant of several moth species.

8 Dandelions may produce enough nectar to meet a bumblebee's basic energy needs. (Source: Plantlife)

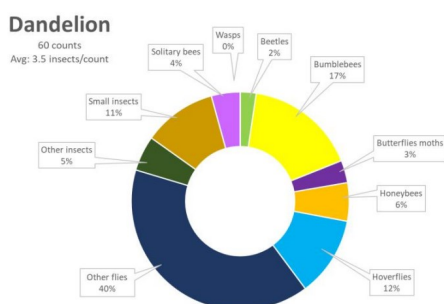
Dandelions are self fertile, so the seeds develop without pollination, producing clones of itself.

A variety of birds eat dandelion seeds, including goldfinch, redpolls, siskins, greenfinch and bullfinch, providing them with an early source of food.

Dandelions are one of the 15 target flowers in the **Flower-Insect Timed (FIT) Count**, a citizen science survey where you simply watch a patch of flowers for 10 minutes and count how many insects visit.

It's a useful tool to measure the change in biodiversity, after taking action for pollinators on your farm, find our more here <https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/fit-counts/>

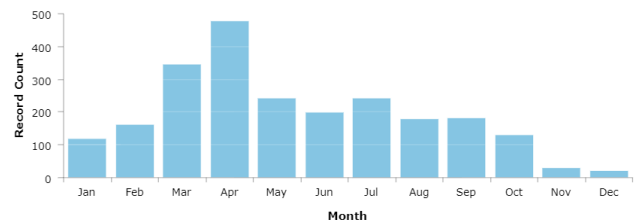
Based on the 2022 survey results, other flies and bumblebees were the most common visitors to Dandelions.



When?

Dandelions have a long flowering season, starting in early spring, supplying pollinators with nectar and pollen for a long period.

Records per month across all datasets



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Dandelion, image, accessed 18 April 2023,

Where on the farm?

Dandelions can be found in many places around the farm, but usually preferring moist grassy places.

Dandelions generally indicate the soil is compacted and may be low in calcium.

Value

- Reduce soil compaction and improve soil health. Generally indicate the ground is compacted and may be low in calcium.
- The thick tap root of the Dandelion burrows deep into the soil mining these nutrients and opening the soil up to allow air and water to get in and feed the soil biome.
- Harvested in silage, the Dandelion greenery is rich in vitamins A, C and K and minerals calcium, potassium, iron and manganese.
- Valuable plant for pollinators.
- The leaves are sometimes used as a salad vegetable and the flowers are used in making dandelion wine.

Similar species

There are many microspecies of Dandelion species, which can be difficult to identify, so we have classed the species as *Taraxcum agg.* to include all species.

With other yellow flowers, remember, only Dandelion has a hollow stem.

Affected by a change in climate?

They may be affected by a change in flowering periods.

Need some help with identification?

Just drop us a line, we'll be happy to help:
pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie

Useful Links

John Feehan has a series on the 'Wildflowers of Offlay', including 2 parts on Dandelions:

Part 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYtMgbWY85Y>

Part 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yME9wwscFY4>

Wildflowers of Ireland:

http://www.wildflowersofireland.net/plant_detail.php?id_flower=86

Record here

Your records will help us build a picture of farmland biodiversity in Ireland. If you're happy with your Dandelion identification, you can submit your record:

- On our website at the National Biodiversity Data Centre: <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/biodiversity-on-your-farm>

or

- You could also download our free smartphone App for recording in the field

Android App:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=nbdc.mobile.biodiversity>

iPhone App:

<https://apps.apple.com/ie/app/biodiversity-data-capture/id906361120>

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