

Dandelions

Do you have a lot of yellow flowers in your yard this spring? Thanks to all the rain we have had mowing yards has been a challenge but dandelions don't seem to mind the rain. As a child I use to love picking dandelions and making necklaces and bracelets with them. Do you remember just sitting and blowing the little seed parachutes to see how far they would go? Most adults have a love/hate relationship with this perennial weed that belongs to the Asteraceae (Sunflower) family. The dandelion is one of the most common lawn weeds found in our yards but it does have value as a medicinal herb as well as a forage plant for livestock, and an early pollen source for our pollinators.

Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* was native to Europe but now can be found throughout the northern temperate zones. The entire dandelion plant is edible and has been used as a medicinal plant since Roman times. Several countries actually cultivate this plant for its medicinal properties. The leaves or greens can be added to salads when they are tender in the spring. The dandelion flowers are used to make Dandelion Wine, which tastes similar to sherry and supposedly is an excellent tonic. The taproot can be roasted to make Dandelion Coffee.

One of the easiest ways to get rid of dandelion weeds in your lawn is to pull them out but you need to make sure and get the deep taproot or the plants will grow back. There are several dandelion tools on the market that will "pop" the plant right out of the ground. These tools seem to work best if the soil is moist not dry so now would be the right time to try this method.

There are several herbicides labeled for dandelions in landscape, turf and bare ground areas. Apply any herbicide according to label directions.

When dandelions are blooming, mow frequently to prevent the yellow blossoms from maturing into seeds. Some people say that you can pour boiling water on them as a low tech method of controlling them. Another option may be to mulch them using cardboard or plastic to prevent them from getting sunlight. Another option is a 5-percent concentration of vinegar that is sprayed directly on the plant leaves. Yet another option is the organic weed and feed method developed by Iowa State University, corn gluten meal (CGM). Corn Gluten Meal is a yellow powder created as a by-product of milling corn and is primarily used in farm animal feeds and dog food. It is also used as a "pre-emergent" weed control for lawns. A pre-emergent, such as corn gluten meal, prevents roots from forming during seed germination. If a root can't grow, the seedling is unable to obtain water or nourishment from the soil and will dry up and die. To control dandelions, it is best applied to the lawn about four to six weeks before weeds germinate. If you didn't make that deadline you can still apply corn gluten meal a few times during the growing season. The nitrogen in the meal will keep your lawn green and healthy. Another option to control dandelions is to use a weed burner torch.

I've been told by my beekeeper friends that dandelions provide a valuable feed source for honey bees in the spring so you may want to reconsider getting rid of those yellow flowers in your yard to help out the honey bees.

2011 Berkeley County Youth Fair Dates

Friday, May 6, 2011 from 6 pm until 8 pm is the market lamb and market goat check in. If you cannot attend this check in please contact the sheep chairperson, Sandy Davis or goat chairperson, Michelle McDonald or Drew Bohrer to have your market goat or market lamb checked in PRIOR to 8 pm on Friday, May 6th. Market lambs and market goats not checked in PRIOR to 8 pm on Friday, May 6th will not be allowed to show or sell at the 2011 Berkeley County Youth Fair.

All pre-registration forms are posted on the BCYF website except for small pets and wool fiber. Pre-Registration forms must be to Lisa Duvall by May 10, 2011. If forms are not to Lisa Duvall by May 10, 2011, you will not show your animal at the 2011 Berkeley County Youth Fair.

2011 Western Maryland Pasture-Based Meat Goat Performance Test

The nomination period for the 2011 Western Maryland Pasture-Based Meat Goat Performance Test opened on Friday, April 1 and closes on May 15. All nominations received by May 15 will be treated the same. It is not necessary to identify individual goats on the nomination form. Just indicate the number of goats that you plan to consign. There is a \$20 per goat nomination fee. A balance of \$65 per goat will be due upon delivery to the test site. Goats must be delivered to the test site on Friday or Saturday, June 3 or 4. Special arrangements can be made for those who need to deliver their goats before June 3. No goats can be brought to the test site after June 4. If nominations exceed test capacity, preference will be given to Maryland residents and previous consigners. Up to 80 goats will be accepted for the 2011 test. All nominations received during the nomination period will be treated the same. If more than 80 goats are nominated, preference will be given to previous consigners and Maryland residents.

<http://www.sheepandgoat.com/programs/GoatTest/2011/2011guidelinesprotocol.pdf>

<http://www.sheepandgoat.com/programs/GoatTest/2011/2011Nominationform.pdf>

Please contact Susan at sschoen@umd.edu or (301) 432-2767 x343 if you have any questions about this year's test.

Looking for Plants for Your Garden

The Berkeley-Jefferson Master Gardeners will be selling plants at Boydsville and helping sell plants for the Grove Center at the Adams Stephen House as part of Martinsburg Heritage Day on Saturday May 7 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. The Morgan County Master Gardeners will be holding their annual plant sale in Berkeley Springs at the State Park in downtown, on May 6 from 9:00 am – 6:00 pm and May 7 from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm.

Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival

The Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival is being held May 7th & 8th, 2011 at the Howard County Fairgrounds in West Friendship, Maryland. For information on the Festival go to www.sheepandwool.org

27th Annual Jefferson County Expo

The 27th Annual Jefferson County Expo will be held May 7, 2011 with the Fairgrounds opening at 7:00 am and all animals in place by 9:00 am. Shows start at 9:00 am with the English Horse Show and the Sheep Show. Also at 9:00 am there will be a Dairy Cattle Fitting & Showing Workshop and a Rabbit 101 Workshop. At 9:30 am is the Dairy Show then at 10:00 am the Rabbit Judging and Saddles & Smiles Class and Dairy & Feeder Goat Show. 12:30 pm is the Western Horse Show & Speed events. The Beef Show is slated for 1:00 pm. For more information go to <http://jeffersoncountyfairwv.org/home/expo-2011.html>

Garden Tips

- Seed summer squash and cucumbers
- Seed late celery
- Seed sweet corn
- Plant early celery and tomatoes
- Seed annual flowers
- Remember to buy your mother flowers for Mother's Day May 8th

Until next time ... Until next time ...Happy Mother's Day, Gardening, and Farming!

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