

The ENEMY: Dandelion (*Taracacum officinale*)

STRATEGY: A perennial plant that grows almost everywhere. This plant from Europe has a yellow flower that grows at the terminal end of the hollow extension. The plant excretes a milky latex when broken off. It has a fairly shallow tap root and produces by seed. The plant is unique in that it can flower up to 9 times a year, as most plants will only flower once a year. The flowers develop into oval shaped seed pod which form plumes of seeds that can be spread by the wind (or kids, in which, I call job security) and can travel for miles. This plant grows in lawns, landscapes, alfalfa fields, pastures, rangelands, and even cracks in the sidewalk. It is not a noxious weed, as to most people's dislike.

Attack: Dandelion is an aggressive weed, and when left unchecked will invade to a strong monoculture. Although highly forageable by livestock, it competes against the desirable grasses. The taproot extends below the normal depth of the grasses, thus robs them of their needed moisture and nutrients.

DEFENSE: Keep your lawns and pastures healthy and your neighbor's weeds cannot become yours. Once invaded, try having the livestock graze on it, if that is not desirable then digging up the plant is effective if there is just a few plants. Ensure that you get the crown of the plant out of the ground which is usually about 2 inches below the soil surface. Numerous herbicides are available, but 2,4-D is usually the best and cheapest to use and fall can be one of the most effective times to control the plant. When treating the weed, consideration should be put toward other weeds in the pasture/lawn as most herbicides will take out Dandelion. If all else fails, I understand that Dandelion wine is quite good and the root makes good coffee.

