



Title: *"Dandelion"*

Description: A young dandelion plant, about to bloom.

Photographer: Nicola Pye

Where, when: Dunedin, September 2021

Sustainability? While no-one would recommend propagating them, dandelions are one of the least harmful introduced plants in Aotearoa New Zealand, and are not classified as invasive, although many people find them aesthetically bothersome in their lawns.

Conventional farmers generally like to keep things tidy and designed for maximum productivity. They hone pasture composition to just having a few fast-growing species and regulate grazing to maintain the grasses between an optimum band for maximising regrowth. A new group of "Regenerative farmers" are gathering and sharing ideas in US, parts of Europe, as well as in New Zealand. They follow a more "biological farming" approach, similar in some respects to organic growers. They encourage a wider range of plants in their pasture, including dandelions, and focus on building soil quality and depth by building up the root mass.

A conventional intensively managed pasture is hyper efficient, but its root depth is shallow and nearly all of the natural production is happening in the top 10 cm of the soil. In drought-stricken areas, dandelions can be valuable as their deep root systems help transport nitrogen and other nutrients to the soil surface. It's this type of long-term and ecological thinking that encourages many regenerative farmers to overthrow the long-standing productivity focused conventional systems that

predominate in New Zealand. It remains to be seen if the regenerative agriculture and organic agriculture approaches eventually gain more traction in Aotearoa.

The benefits of these emerging alternative forms of agriculture may be many and subtle. Research has found that the protein and mineral content (phosphorous, magnesium, sodium, copper, zinc and boron) of dandelions are superior to those of the traditional stock animal feeds of ryegrass and clover, which is probably of benefit to these animals. http://www.nzpps.org/journal/59/nzpp_592610.pdf

Dandelions are also high in many vitamins and minerals that are beneficial to humans, and are consumed around the world, as traditional medicines, in teas, as a coffee substitute, or even in salads. Recent research has examined the potential effects of dandelion against various cancers.

So are dandelions really a weed, or a valuable new part of New Zealand's biodiversity that can help keep our ecosystems and people healthy?

Photo notes: *Camera:* OM-D E-M5 Mark II. *Lens:* Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 12-40mm F2.8 Pro. *Settings:* f/11 10 sec ISO1600 34mm.

This is another image where I felt the beauty could be seen much better when an individual example was photographed away from its natural setting. There is something so simple and elegant about a dandelion before and after it has flowered, while at maximum bloom it's almost gaudy. The muted colours in this image aim to enhance the form of the bud.

Digital specs: 3490x 4607 pixels (9.34 MB).

Key words: Weeds, beauty, tenebrism, spring, dandelion, *Taraxacum officinale*, botany, environmental threats, agrobiodiversity, regenerative agriculture, organic agriculture, Nicola Pye, Aotearoa, New Zealand, sustainability

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Animals are often used as pawns in domestic violence situations, just as children can be. Many people delay leaving, or do not leave, dangerous relationships at home, as they may not be able to take their pets with them, and know that to leave them behind will not be safe. Pet Refuge provides temporary accommodation and care for animals, so that their owners can escape to safer places, knowing that their pet will be cared for until they are settled in a new violence-free life. This can be particularly important for children who may have lost other major relationships through domestic violence, and need as much emotional security as possible.

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Nicola Pye
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