



One day they aren't there. The next day they are. That's how quickly the most traditional and maligned blooms of springtime appear when all the conditions get right. One day you have that perfect, green lawn, looking like a sparkling, new carpet around your home. The next, Mother Nature has sprinkled her cheery, springtime confetti all about your pristine, mowed-within-an-inch-of-its-life bluegrass.

Dandelions. Bah! Humbug! Weeds! Sez who? Well, no, dandelions don't carry the social significance of, say, a rose or an orchid. They don't match the fragrance of a carnation or a butterfly bush or a heliotrope. Or exude the majestic aura of a perfectly formed iris.

Dandelion stems don't lend themselves well to artistic

arrangements. Nor do they hold up in a casual bouquet with the stamina of a chrysanthemum, or a zinnia, or a host of cheery, durable daisies. In fact, picked and plunked into a vase of water, dandelions will wilt into a limp mop.

But who could deny the beauty of their brilliant, almost-neon yellow? Their myriad of miniscule, pointed petals, perfectly shaped and layered into a mound of gold? Their attraction to toddlers too innocent to know or care that dandelions have been relegated to the renegade side of the plant world and who lovingly pick a bouquet for you?

Is it just coincidence that the early wild flowers of spring echo the bright, optimistic colors of the sky: yellow for sunshine and blues reflecting the heavens overhead? As the dandelions suddenly burst on the scene in full, if somewhat coarse, blossoms, dainty wild violets smile

with clear blue faces in color contrast and natural companionship.

And, at least in our yard, both of these uncultivated plants bloom at the feet of the cascades of yellow forsythias. Our resident cardinal pair likes to pause in the forsythia enroute to the bird feeder, the male's brilliant red in dramatic color-contrast to the glowing forsythia. And cool weather this year extended their breathtaking beauty far longer than usual, along with the clumps of daffodils—yellow (and lots of whites, too)—scattered among the flowerbeds.

Slowly, other colors begin to introduce themselves into the landscape, as a few pink hyacinths venture out under the contoneaster bush and coral tulips push up among the late daffodils on a bank.

But nothing is more indicative of the season than those ubiquitous chips of yellow which scatter themselves about, even venturing into places where more "civilized" plants rarely go.

We have dandelions blooming from between the cracks of a sidewalk. We have dandelions blooming between paving stones forming a patio base. We have dandelions blooming among

retaining walls and pushed up along the edge of protruding old maple tree roots, where virtually nothing else dares to intrude.

Under our live-and-let-live lawn policy, dandelions are pretty much left alone in our yard, to do their thing, then disappear until another year. Some weeds, like thistles, find themselves ousted, but dandelions are tolerated.

Besides, we recently had a cow calf with such a huge bull calf that it injured her pelvis. She was turned out in the yard, close by, for exercise. When a

herdmate developed a severe udder infection that threw her off feed, she likewise was sent to the yard for fresh green grass, one of the few things she could eat in her stress.

With a couple of cows wandering about the yard, dandelion blooms are almost welcome by comparison with other lawn "ornamentation." At least with dandelions, you don't have to watch carefully where you step.

One day they're here. And then, suddenly, they aren't.

If only the other "ornamentation" disappeared as quickly.



The April meeting of the Lancaster County 4-H Beef Club was conducted at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 7.

The program for the evening was a Beef Skillathon Practice. The club also discussed selling

subs for its fund raiser this year. Members will be making subs Thursday, May 20 at 5:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 5, at the home of vice-president, Jessica Schmidt.

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