

## Vascular Plants of Williamson County

### *Taraxacum officinale* – COMMON DANDELION [Asteraceae]

*Taraxacum officinale* F. H. Wigg., COMMON DANDELION. Perennial herb, taprooted with short root crown, rosetted, acaulous, scapose with 1–10+ inflorescences, 5–60 cm tall; shoots with several–20+ basal leaves, rosette 10–80 cm across with horizontal or ascending, leaves thin and easily wilted, latex milky, copious; taproot long,  $\pm$  thick, sometimes with branched caudices, tan to brown, white-fleshed. **Leaves:** helically alternate, deeply lobed, petiolate, without stipules; petiole 10–40 mm long, not sharply distinct from blade, white to rose with tawny, soft long hairs at flaring winglike base; blade oblanceolate or oblong to spatulate, 30–450  $\times$  7–100 mm, long-tapered to broadly tapered at base, lobed to irregularly cut, the lobes alternate to subopposite, broadly to narrowly triangular or lanceolate and sometimes backward-pointing (runcinate), the sinuses from midblade nearly to midrib, terminal segment  $\pm$  deltate to arrow-shaped, toothed and sometimes wavy on margins, acute to acuminate or obtuse at tip, pinnately veined with midrib raised on both surfaces, dull green, initially villous often becoming almost glabrate. **Inflorescence:** heads solitary, ligulate, hemispheric with sunken center, 20–50 mm across, of 40–100+ flowers, bracteate; peduncle (scape) hollow-cylindric, 50–400+  $\times$  1.5–7 mm, light green to rose and faintly striped, smooth, thin-walled, with scattered hairs along axis and long hairs at base and approaching head, with bracts at top (calyculus), calyculus bracts 13–19 in 2–3 series, reflexed, lanceolate, 5–10  $\times$  1.2–2 mm, with membranous margins; **involucre** bell-shaped, 14–25 mm wide, phyllaries 13–19 in 2 series, at anthesis erect, linear to narrowly lanceolate, 8–18  $\times$  1.3–2.8 mm, green or brownish and often purplish to gray at tip, glaucous, membranous on 1 or both margins, sometimes with a subterminal projection on midvein on outer surface, papillate or puberulent at tongue-shaped tip; receptacle slightly concave aging convex in fruit, without bractlets (paleae), not pitted, glabrous. **Flower:** bisexual, bilateral,  $\pm$  2 mm across, lightly scented; **calyx** (**pappus**) of 80+ capillary bristles in 1 series, at anthesis 3.7–5 mm long increasing in fruit, silky white, on a cylindric beak, the beak at anthesis 0.3–0.8 mm long increasing in fruit; **corolla** shallowly 5-toothed, 9–17 mm long; tube 1.5–3.5 mm long, pale yellow to white; limb strap-shaped, 7–12.5  $\times$  1.5–2.2 mm, bright yellow but on the outermost flowers throat and lower surface of limb red-brown to olive brown or light red, outer throat and lower surface of limb base  $\pm$  tomentose; **stamens** 5, fused to corolla tube at base of throat; filaments 1.5–2 mm long, yellow; anthers fused into cylinder surrounding style, exserted, basifixed, dithecal, 2.7–4 mm long, yellow and faintly red-striped, with linear appendages at base  $\pm$  0.3 mm long, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen bright yellow; **nectary** cupped at base of style, weakly 4-lobed, ca. 0.2 mm long and wide, greenish yellow, producing thin nectar; **pistil** 1; ovary inferior, inversely conic with truncate base,  $\pm$  1.2 mm long, white, with short, light green beak, with bumps and minute scales at top forming a transverse pattern, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style exserted 2–4 mm beyond anthers, 9–13 mm long, 2-branched, yellowish below fork, with radiating to ascending short hairs, the branches spreading and recurved, 1.5–2 mm long, orangish with faintly reddish spots, glabrous on flat upper side. **Fruits:** cypselsae with long beak and silky pappus, fruit body oblanceoloid and several-angled, 2.8–3  $\times$  0.6–0.8 mm, olive brown, often with 5 deep, narrow longitudinal grooves, with bumps (tubercles), above midpoint having ascending, acute, short scales arranged in 12–16 columns, upper fruit body tapered 0.5–0.9 mm; fruit beak

7–9 mm long, slender but wider where attached to fruit body; pappus in spheric array of 80–110 capillary bristles, 5–7 mm long, grayish white.

A. C. Gibson & B. A. Prigge