

WHITE CLOVER

Ladino Clover, Dutch Clover

Trifolium repens

Fabaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Origin

White Clover is a temperate, legume developed in North Italy. The first cultivation was begun in the Netherlands in the 16th century, England and North America in the 18th century. This perennial, pasture plant has large, oval leaflets, white flowers and creeping stems that form new roots at each node.

Uses

Planted with other grasses, White Clover is cut for hay and silage or pastured for the protein that it provides for sheep and other foraging animals. Being a legume, White Clover improves soil by fixing nitrogen in nodules on its roots. The creeping stems help provide erosion control. In comparison to other clovers, this plant variety is 2 to 4 times larger.

Cultivation

White clover is adapted to clay and silt soils, with annual rainfall of 900 mm (35 in) or more, but is not tolerant of saline or highly alkaline soil. Broadcast or sown in rows 15 cm (6 in) apart, young plants will establish themselves and spread. After grazing, fields may be mowed and cuttings dispersed. Ladino Clover is dominant in areas where there is a low level of inorganic N. Plants are cross-pollinated by insects and honeybees especially prefer the nectar. Where seed production is desired, fields should be at least 200 m (2600 ft) from any other variety of clover.

Harvesting and Seed Production

White Clover readily reseeds itself and also spreads by runners. The most seed is produced from the early flowering varieties and four years of seed harvests can be expected. Seeds heads become brown or light yellow and are harvested when 80% have changed color. Because this clover grows low to the ground, it is often necessary to mow and then separate the foliage from the seeds by threshing. Before flowering, it is advisable to mow high to remove foliage that causes too much shade for heavy flower production. The seeds can remain viable in the soil for 4 years. After air-drying with moving air, White Clover seeds can be stored above ground at low moisture (9% or lower).

Pests and Diseases

White Clover seed should be free of the seeds of dodder, a parasitic weed. When cleaning the seed, a gravity seed separator is useful in removing dodder seeds.

Cooking and Nutrition

The seeds of White Clover are excellent protein for poultry, sheep, swine, lambs, etc. Grazing of White Clover may cause bloating in livestock if clover is the dominant plant or if livestock are very hungry and graze too fast.

References

Heuzé V., Tran G., Hassoun P., Lebas F., 2019. *White clover (Trifolium repens)*. Feedipedia, a programme by INRA, CIRAD, AFZ and FAO. <https://www.feedipedia.org/node/245> Last updated on April 10, 2019, 14:04

<http://ecocrop.fao.org/ecocrop/srv/en/dataSheet?id=2105>