

Dutch White Clover: (*Trifolium repens*)

Leaf and Flower:

This is a small-leaf clover, sometimes called “wild white”. It has 3 distinctive heart-shaped leaflets that make up the dark green compound leaf. The leaflets have white crescents on them. Dutch clover has white or pink ball shaped flowers that are held slightly above the foliage. The flowers are up to 1 ¼” in diameter and appear from May to September.

Height: A low growing plant that reaches 4 – 8” high. This ground-cover plant can be kept without the need for mowing making a 100% clover lawn low maintenance.

Soil:

It is a perennial plant that tolerates dry soils once established but also thrives during wet, cool summers. Clover grows in well-drained, moist, low-fertile soils. It thrives without fertilizer because it fixes nitrogen from the atmosphere, enriching the soil. The target soil pH for growing clover is 6 - 6.5. You may do a soil test to see if your soil is too acidic or alkaline. To raise soil pH use dolomitic lime, but do so according to your soil test results.

Light requirements: Adaptable; thrives in sun or shade and spreads to fill in any gaps in the lawn.

Propagation: It roots at the nodes on the creeping stems thus filling in areas quickly. Seeding is another method but “buyer beware”. Make sure your seed store knows what kind of clover seed you have. You may wind up with a higher growing clover than the one you want for the lawn. The other varieties are used for forage crops. White Dutch clover is readily available on the Internet. Remember you want the low growing kind.

Note: White clover needs bacterium inoculants for best growth. Some vendors sell seeds with it already in place. Some sell it separately. Ask before you buy.

If you are using only clover for a lawn, 1 lb. Covers 1,000 sq. ft. Clover seed is very small so to get an even distribution mix the clover seed with sand or sawdust.

For a newly seeded lawn, add clover at a rate of 1 oz. Per 1,000 sq. ft (2 – 4 lbs/acre) to your lawn seed and mix it well before seeding the lawn. A little seed goes a long way.

If overseeding an existing lawn, this can be done in early spring or in mid August to early September. Use twice the amount of seed as for a new lawn. If seeding in the spring, mow the grass closely to reduce competition from the grass, power rake or scruff the soil surface to provide good soil to seed contact. Broadcast the seed (2–8 oz. /1,000 sq. ft.) depending on the amount of clover desired in the lawn. At 8oz., the clover will become the dominant plant. Use a roller to press the seed into the soil and water in. Keep the soil moist until it becomes established.

Seeding and watering for clover only: Prepare your soil first, making sure that you have a firm seedbed with a moist bottom. Level the area if it is irregular due to settling from the watering; then seed. Spread the seed by hand or with a seeder. Roll to press seed into the

soil. The seed should not be any deeper than 4 mm into the soil. Using a fine gentle spray, thoroughly water the area immediately, to moisten the soil to 1" depth. Then water every 7 – 10 days until it is established. Once clover is established, irrigation is needed when you see the leaves begin to cup together. The depth of soil and the root zone determine the amount of water needed, normally 1-3" of water per irrigation is sufficient.

Benefits:

-It is a nodulated legume, which fixes nitrogen from the air so it doesn't require additional nitrogen fertilizer.

- Tolerates dog urine
- Tolerates low mowing well, and mowing is optional—Competes with weeds and is insect resistant—no toxic pesticides are needed.
- Hardy for foot traffic, children's play area and Canadian winters.
- Stays green through drought periods of summer
- Looks good when blended evenly throughout the lawn.
- Blooms all summer long when not mowed.

Clover and Grass Mixed Lawns:

As stated above, since clover fixes nitrogen into the soil, the amount of fertilizer that the grass needs is greatly reduced or eliminated saving money.

If the homeowner is conserving water during the summer months, the clover will remain green even though the grass may turn brown due to dormancy.

By not having to mow your grass/clover lawn you help reduce greenhouse gases that are emitted from your lawn mower and gives you time that you can spend elsewhere.

The clover competes for space with weeds thus reducing weeds in the lawn

An evenly mixed lawn of grass and clover is very attractive, and until the 1980's it was the norm.

cc. City of Ottawa

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