

Lawn Care

A discussion of the vital problems of lawn making and maintenance

PUBLISHED SEVERAL TIMES YEARLY BY

O. M. SCOTT & SONS COMPANY - SEEDSMEN - MARYSVILLE, OHIO

Vol. V

August 1932

No. 4

YELLOW TREFOIL

Not a Bad Weed, But Out of Place in a Lawn

MOST weeds have flourished this season but Yellow Trefoil or Black Medick has outdone itself. Specimens of this weed have come in for identification from almost every northern state and we are informed by several experiment stations that they have had the same experience. One authority says, "Yellow Trefoil seems to be prevalent all over the country this season. In 1928 we noticed it growing in our golf course fairways and this is the first year since that time it has put in its appearance."

ONCE USED IN LAWN MIXTURES.

While Trefoil is not considered a noxious weed it does not belong in a lawn. Yet it is surprising to learn that Trefoil seed has in years past been used in lawn mixtures as a substitute for White Clover. Perhaps that is where this weed got its first start in lawns. At present it is found most frequently in the seed of farm crops such as Alfalfa, Sweet Clover and Red

Clover. Stock does not object to it so on the farm Trefoil causes very little concern.

YELLOW BLOSSOM EASILY IDENTIFIES IT.

The illustration is handicapped because of not being able to show the small clover-shaped yellow blooms. They make this weed very easy to identify. Trefoil is a member of the clover family and the small blossom, except for the color, is a miniature of White Clover. It is an annual and would be easy to destroy before the plants go to seed except that they grow very flat on the ground and the mower is apt to miss them. Its range is throughout the world in all temperate climates. The plant itself branches out and spreads in creeping fashion. The leaves are finely haired, rounded and slightly toothed at the tips. The pods containing the seeds are thin skinned, kidney shaped and slightly twisted. Each pod contains just one seed.



YELLOW TREFOIL
Medicago lupulina, L.

SEEDS RESEMBLE ALFALFA.

The seeds themselves are yellow and very much resemble alfalfa and sweet clover seeds. When found in these seeds

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it is very difficult to remove as well as to recognize. We recall having once seen an almost perfect stand of Trefoil in an athletic field which had shortly before been sowed with a grass mixture. There was no accounting for the weed because Trefoil seed is not found in the grasses. Later it was discovered that several inches of topsoil had been brought in from bottom ground along a river. This soil was fairly alive with the seeds of Trefoil. They needed only cultivation to arouse them to activity.

ACCOUNTING FOR PRESENT PREVALENCE.

One of the best known seed analysts in the country volunteers this comment:

"I think likely soil conditions may have had something to do with its development. Undoubtedly the lack of moisture affects Trefoil and makes it more noticeable, because other grasses die out and this plant, having a deeper rootstalk, subsists. We have had an insufficient amount of rainfall the past five years. The plant may therefore have had an advantage over less deeply rooted plants and has obtained a good foothold. We have noticed the increase in the growth of this weed in lawns of this area" [New Jersey].

METHODS OF CONTROL.

A large area badly infested with Trefoil should be rebuilt or, if there is no objection to White Clover, a heavy seeding of it will usually crowd the Trefoil out. When once discouraged by the crowding method, other grasses may be introduced since clover is not liked by many good lawn enthusiasts. Small patches of Trefoil may be removed by hand when the ground is wet. This should not be delayed until after the plants have gone to seed. Cornell University, in one of its bulletins, advocates killing Trefoil by spraying with an iron sulfate solution, the same as for dandelions.

Because Trefoil is not unsightly it is sometimes disregarded in a lawn until it becomes so wide spread that its eradication is a serious problem. We advise being on the lookout for this weed and suppressing it before it becomes too ambitious.



Vital Facts on Mowing

THE general practice of mowing lawns closely is harmful to the turf. Except in the case of Creeping Bent, any grass will be much stronger and healthier if a growth of $1\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 inches remains after clipping.

Higher cutting of grass enables it to better withstand drouth because such grass has a more extensive root system which can reach the reserve moisture abundant at greater depths. Then, too, surface evaporation is reduced because the grass acts as a sort of mulch.

Close mowing favors the encroachment of weeds. It leaves the grass weak and thin so that it cannot compete with dandelions, crab grass, chickweed, etc. It is also more subject to injury by grubs and sod web worms as weak roots are unable to withstand attacks of these pests.

Agricultural authorities agree that grass should be cut at a height not less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches and preferably 2 inches. One difficulty encountered in following this practice is to secure suitable high cutting lawn mowers. Many mowers can be adjusted to cut this high or extension brackets can be obtained to lower the wooden roller. If this is not feasible the old rollers can be replaced by larger ones which will raise the knife the proper amount.

The importance of high cutting cannot be over-emphasized. It is most important during the summer months and again in late fall. Grass is less apt to winterkill if it goes into the winter with a growth of two or three inches.