

# Lawn Care

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## WHITE CLOVER IN LAWNS

“LEAVE Clover out of the grass seed you send us. We detest it in a lawn,” says one group. “Please add extra Clover. We want more of it,” says another group.

Thus opinions differ on the merit of White Clover as a member of the lawn population. Some classify it as a weed while others consider no lawn complete without it. This divergence of opinion is only natural in the light of the plant’s pronounced advantages and disadvantages.

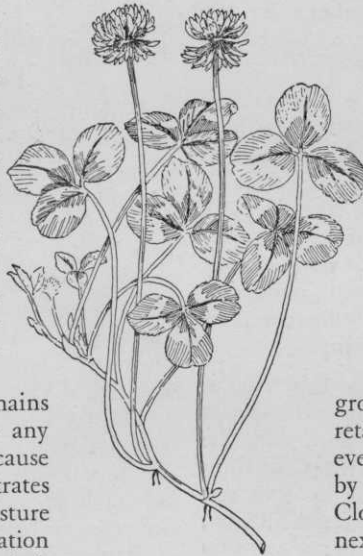
White Clover remains green and withstands any normal dry spell because its long taproot penetrates down to subsoil moisture supplies. As the illustration indicates, Clover has a definite spreading habit. The creeping stems branch freely and develop numerous roots near the surface which draw on a shallow but nevertheless large volume of soil for food and water. This spreading habit explains the tendency of White Clover to develop in distinct patches, one of its unbecoming characteristics.

Even after close mowing, Clover looks green because many of its leaves are close to the ground and stems are not exposed. These leaves, however, are an objection in the minds of some peo-

ple, because they are broad and coarse when compared to the slender, tapering blades of grass.

White Clover is none too dependable for it sometimes dies out suddenly, particularly in winter, and leaves ugly bare patches.

The small white blossoms of Clover are enjoyed by some, despised by others. They are produced so close to the ground that many escape the mower blades. Thus seeds are allowed to ripen and fall on the ground. Their vitality is retained for many years so even a few seeds scattered by nature remain potential Clover patches during the next 10 or 20 years.



WHITE CLOVER

### A Volunteer Plant

It is this prolific propagation which has resulted in Clover seed being universally distributed through most soils and accounts for it “volunteering” in areas where it has never been planted. It is quite probable that the seeds reach many lawns through topsoil, animal and bird manures.

### Clover a Legume—Not Grass

White Clover is not a grass but a legume. By virtue of this fact it is able to secure its nitrogen supplies from the

air, a feat which grass is unable to accomplish. Thus Clover is frequently a success on nitrogen-starved soil where grass can not exist.

This nitrogen gathering ability of Clover possibly accounts for the fact that one year the plant grows abundantly everywhere but the next year may completely disappear. When Clover is growing vigorously it is taking nitrogen from the air and storing it in the soil. This may prove its own undoing for an accumulation of nitrogen in the soil stimulates grass to such a degree that it can take possession of the area. When the nitrogen supply is again depleted Clover comes into the ascendency once more, making use of the atmospheric nitrogen. So the Grass-Clover cycle goes on and on.

### Sow It Separately

In view of the differences of opinion about Clover and its adaptability in lawns, there seems but one logical solution: let those who like it sow it alone but not in a seed mixture. There are good reasons for this recommendation.

First, Clover seeds are heavy and round. It is impossible to prepare a lawn seed mixture that does not result in the Clover seed settling to the bottom of the package in the process of handling. Then it is all sown in the last few handfuls and not evenly distributed over the lawn.

Second, there are sometimes certain areas in the lawn where Clover is wanted for special duty; for example, to help combat some weed or fill in where grasses won't thrive.

Third, Clover seed should be sown only in the spring while grass seed can be sown any time. When seeded in the

fall, Clover seldom reaches the stage of development which permits it to survive the winter season.

### Clover Control

The presence of Clover is usually an indication of nitrogen deficiency in the soil and the Clover population can be reduced by simply following a correct lawn feeding program. This consists of at least two applications of a high nitrogen grass food each year, one in the early spring, the other in early fall. Even a third made in mid-summer at half the usual rate, is well worth while.

Co-ordinate this feeding program with one of high mowing. Clover has difficulty thriving in shaded areas and shade can be provided by cutting the lawn two inches high.

Where Clover appears in small isolated patches it may be burned out by applying, in dry form, a corrosive chemical such as ammonium sulfate as suggested for such weeds as Chickweed. If the foliage is first bruised by cutting with a knife, the chemical penetrates and burns more thoroughly. Sometimes patches of Clover are cut out and reseeded or replaced with plugs of sod.

When Clover is growing all through a lawn so that the entire area has to be treated, there are some chemicals which can be sprayed or broadcast dry. They are not recommended for practical purposes because unless they are skillfully applied all good grass may be destroyed with the Clover. Furthermore, their use offers only temporary relief. The chemical may kill present plants but not seeds in the ground. Clover seeds are hard-shelled and not easily penetrated by chemicals.

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