Alsike clover

Scientific name(s)

*Trifolium hybridum*

**Strengths**

- High nutritive value and productive late in the season in cool temperate areas just too dry to sustain white clover.
- Tolerant of poor drainage. Free of oestrogen risks.

**Limitations**

- Low production in winter

**Plant description**

- **Plant:** grows to 30-60 cm.
- **Stems:** Indeterminate. Branching hollow. The well developed crown produces many prostrate stems up to 1 m.
- **Leaves:** plain, hairless; large leaflets with serrated margins.
- **Flowers:** dense clusters on long stalk; globe shaped to 2.5 cm diameter; pale pink/white, fade to brown
- **Pods:** numerous seed pods containing 1-3 seeds
- **Seeds:** black/olive green/yellow; ~1.5 million/kg

**Pasture type and use**

A semi-erect biennial or short-lived perennial that can maintain presence through ability to recruit seedlings

**Where it grows**

- **Rainfall**
  - > 500 mm
- **Soils**
  - Suited to a wide range of acidity/alkalinity. Tolerates low fertility and poorly drained soils. Well suited to peaty soil
- **Temperature**
  - Excellent cold tolerance. Naturally suited to montane environments. Low shade tolerance.

**Establishment**

- **Companion species**
  - **Grasses:** phalaris, tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, timothy
  - **Legumes:** strawberry, red, sub. and white clovers
Herbs: plantain

Sowing/planting rates as single species
3-5 kg/ha; sow at 5-15 mm into a clean, finely worked seed bed and roll

Sowing/planting rates in mixtures
2 kg/ha

Sowing time
When soil temp. >10° C. Autumn, or early spring in long growing seasons

Inoculation
Group B

Fertiliser
Correct any nutrient deficiencies, especially K, P, Mo, S

Management

Maintenance fertiliser
For optimum growth Olsen soil P > 15

Grazing/cutting
Very suitable for hay-making and extensive/hill country grazing.

Seed production
Prolific seeder

Ability to spread
Recruits seedlings well; cattle effectively spread seed via dung

Weed potential
Moderate on disturbed land only. Only reproduces via seed. No innate adaptations for long range dispersal

Major pests
Similar to white clover

Major diseases
Limited information

Herbicide susceptibility
Limited information available. 2,4D_B, Basagran, MCPA, MCPB + MCPA in crop seedling stage and POAST ultra on established stand are listed in Canada, refer 2008 Forage Crops Chart - Recommended Herbicides

Animal production

Feeding value
High; nutritive value greater than red clover.

Palatability
Highly palatable

Production potential
Good autumn and spring/early summer vigour
Livestock disorders/toxicity

No oestrogen/toxin problems noted in Australia. Trifoliosis ('dew poisoning/bighead/photosensitization/big liver disease') is attributed to alsike clover poisoning in North America. Light-skinned animals (especially horses) are particularly affected if they are allowed to graze on alsike when it is wet; contains an unknown agent which causes primary and/or secondary (hepatogenous) photosensitization.

Cultivars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultivar</th>
<th>Seed source/Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grasslands Polar</td>
<td>Seedmark*</td>
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Further information

USDA Plants database - Alsike clover

Author and date

KFM Reed, July 9th 2008