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### *Medicago lupulina*

[Synonyms : *Medicago lupulina* var. *cupaniana*, *Medicago lupulina* var. *glandulosa*]

**BLACK MEDICK** is an annual or perennial. Native to Europe (including Britain) and Asia, it has tiny, yellow flowers.

It is also known as Black grass, Black medic, Black nonesuch, Black seed, Black trefoil, Dog clover, *Dumheidic* (Gaelic), Fingers-and-thumbs, *Gelbklee* (German), Hop-clover, *Hopfenklee* (German), *Hopfen-Luzerne* (German), Hop lucerne, Hop medic, *Humlelucern* (Swedish), *Humlelusern* (Swedish), *Humleluzern* (Swedish), *Humle-Sneglebælg* (Danish), Lamb's toes, *Lucerna chmel'ovitá* (Slovak), *Luzerna lupulina* (Portuguese), *Luzerne houblon* (French), *Maglys* (Welsh), *Medikago lupola* (Esperanto), Melilot trefoil, *Minette* (French), Natural grass, *Nefel iswed* (Maltese), Nonesuch, Nonsuch, Sanfoin, Shamrock, *Tolice dětelová* (Czech), *Tolice jetelová* (Czech), *Trêfl'ye à moutons* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Trifogliolino selvatico* (Italian), and Yellow trefoil; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of light-heartedness.

*Lupulina* means 'hop-like'.

Black medick is for some authorities the original shamrock planted in Ireland (according to Christian legend) by St. Patrick - while others until about 1830 opted for wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) or various *Trifolium* species. Black medick can represent St. Patrick – although in modern times lesser trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*) is a most often accepted substitute or, to progressively lesser extents, white clover (*Trifolium repens*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*) or red clover (*Trifolium pratense*). The shamrock of whichever species is not an official Irish emblem (this is reserved for the 12-stringed harp) but it is registered under an international trade mark convention as an Irish symbol. Thousands of 'shamrock' sprigs are exported to England, the European Continent and North America in time to be sported by men and women of Irish descent on St Patrick's Day.]

Some of the North American Indian tribes in southern California have enjoyed eating the seeds. Today this species is usually grown as a fodder crop mixed with grasses.