

Trifolium pratense

[Synonyms : *Trifolium pratense* var. *sativum*]

RED CLOVER is a perennial. Native to Europe it has rose-pink (occasionally cream or off-white) flowers.

It is also known as *Barsim* (Urdu), Bee-bread, Broad clover, Broad-leaved clover, Broad grass, Claver, Cleaver grass, Clover rose, Common clover, Common red clover, Cow-cloos, Cow-grass, Crimson clover, *D'atelina lúčna* (Slovak), *Grand trèfle* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Honeystalks, Honeysuck, Honeysuckle clover, Honeysuckles, *Jetel luční* (Czech), *Klee* (German), King's crown, Knap, Lady's posies, Marl grass, Meadow clover, *Meillionen Goch* (Welsh), Pinkies, Plyvens, *Puna-apila* (Finnish), Purple clover, Purplewort, Real sweet clover, Red cushions, *Rode Klaver* (Dutch), *Rödkläröver* (Swedish), *Rot-Klee* (German), *Rouoge trèfl'ye* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Seamair dhearg* (Gaelic), Shamrock, Sleeping maggie, Soukies, Soukie soo, Suckbottles, Suckles, Suckers, Sucklings, Sugar-bosses, Sugar-plums, Sweet clover, *Trébol* (Spanish), *Tréfle des prés* (French), Trefoil, *Trepatra* (Punjabi), *Trifoi roşu* (Rumanian), *Wiesen-Klee* (German), and Wild clover; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of industry (red), 'not only gay but good' (purple), provident, and 'prudent and watchful' (crimson).

Warning – red clover is potentially poisonous for some animals (particularly cattle, horses and sheep) if consumed in large amounts.

Pratense means 'of or from meadows'.

It was used little medicinally by the ancient Greeks or the Romans. However when it eventually became naturalized in North America, American Indian tribes viewed it as both food and medicine (the latter especially in ointments). Both the Thompson and Shuswap Indian tribes valued it as fodder, the latter particularly for their cows. The Penobscot tribe are said to have applied it not only for burns but they have also used the plant for easing sore eyes. Both the Shinnecock and Thompson tribes used it in the treatment of cancer, and the Iroquois and Rappahannock valued it as a remedy for blood diseases. It provided a treatment for Iroquois women experiencing the menopause, and the Cherokee tribe also used it for some female problems. The latter turned to it for treatments for fever and kidney problems as well, and some of the Algonkin Indians used it as a remedy for whooping-cough.

Today red clover is a state emblem for Vermont in the United States, adopted there in 1895. It has also been and still can be looked upon occasionally as a shamrock sported by Irish men and women on St. Patrick's Day although the most usual species picked for this role is said to be lesser trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*).

This clover used to feature as an ingredient in European homemade wines.

Initial attempts to introduce it to Australia were unsuccessful as although farmers raised extremely good first crops there was no seed for the following year. This was put down to the fact that the bumble-bee had not been imported at the same time to pollinate the flowers.

Its major use at the beginning of the 21st Century is as fodder (especially for milking cows) and as a cover crop.

Medicinally, in Europe herbalists recommended an infusion of the plant for treating coughs (including whooping-cough). Today it can still be employed in the treatment of skin complaints and respiratory conditions.