

CLOVER, RED



Trifolium pratense

[try-FOH-lee-um pray-TEN-see]

Family: Leguminosae

Names: Trifolium, purple clover, sweet clover, cow clover, trefoil, meadow trefoil, cleaver grass, cow grass, honeysuckle, beebread, clover rose, ladies' posy

Description: Erect to sprawling, short-lived perennial with long-stalked leaves divided into 3 obovate leaflets. Purple-pink, sometimes cream, tubular flowers are borne in globose heads from late spring. Height 8-24 inches.

Cultivation: Hardy to 9F. Prefers moist, well-drained, neutral soil in sun. Propagate by seed in spring, or by division in spring. Powdery mildew may affect leaves. Harvest flower heads with upper leaves in summer as they open and dried for infusions, liquid extracts, ointments and tinctures.

History: Red clover is one of the world's oldest agricultural crops, cultivated as forage since prehistoric times. The ball-shaped flowers of the three-leafed herb have been used almost as long in herbal healing. Because of its importance in early agriculture, red clover has a long history as a religious symbol. The ancient Greeks, Romans, and the Celts of pre-Christian Ireland all revered it. Early Christians linked the plant to the Trinity, and some say red clover is the model for Ireland's symbol, the shamrock. Red clover was also the model for the suit of clubs in playing cards. During the Middle Ages, red clover was considered a charm against witchcraft. In the Far East, herbalists had more down-to-earth uses for red clover. In Victorian times, red clover signified industry. Clover cordial was a popular drink in the early days of San Francisco.

Native Americans ate clover in several ways. Sometimes the foliage was eaten fresh before the plant flowered or, as among the digger tribe, it was cooked by placing moistened layers of plants one upon another in a stone oven. The Apaches boiled it with dandelions, grass, and pigweed. The Pomo tribe held special clover feasts and dances in the early spring to celebrate the plant's appearance. Country people in many places believed the red clover to have particular power to cure the bites of poisonous snakes and insects. They boiled the whole plant in water, washed the bitten place with it, then laid some of the freshly crushed leaves on the area.

The Pennsylvania Dutch called Red Clover *Rhoda gae Blumma*. They brewed the dried blossoms into a tea as a remedy for croup and whooping cough. In the Ozarks, a strong tea of red clover blossoms was also used to treat whooping cough and other dry, irritable coughs.

Constituents: High in many important nutrients, including vitamins and minerals. Contains coumarins (mild) and has some estrogenic activity. Is antibiotic against several bacteria including those of tuberculosis. Isoflavones; biochanin A, daidzein, formononetin, genistein, pratensein and trifoside. Other flavonoids, including pectolinarin and trifolin. Volatile oil, containing furfural; Clovamides; L-Dopa-caffeic acid conjugates; Coumarins; coumestrol, medicagol and coumarin; a galactomannan, resins, Phytoalexins, sitosterol, starch and fatty acids.

Properties: sweet, cooling, alterative that relaxes spasms and has diuretic and expectorant effects, antitumor, anticoagulant.

Energetics: sweet, salty, cool

Meridians/Organs affected: liver, heart, lungs

Medicinal Uses: Traditional Chinese physicians have long used red clover blossoms as an expectorant. Russian folk healers recommend it for asthma. Other cultures have used it externally in salves for skin sores and eye problems and internally as a diuretic to treat water retention and as a sedative, anti-inflammatory, cough medicine, and cancer treatment. America's 19th-century Eclectic physicians were great promoters of red clover. Their text, *King's American Dispensatory*, called it "one of the few remedies which favorably influences pertussis [whooping cough]... possess[ing] a peculiar soothing property." The Eclectics recommended red clover for cough, bronchitis, and tuberculosis but waxed truly enthusiastic about the herb as a cancer treatment: "It unquestionably retards the growth of carcinomata." During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, red clover was the major ingredient in many patent medicines.

Red clover is used internally for skin complaints, especially eczema and psoriasis. It may be used with complete safety in cases of childhood eczema, cancers of the breast, ovaries, and lymphatic system, chronic degenerative diseases, gout, whooping cough and dry cough. Combined with chaparral in background treatment of cancer. It has been given as part of a holistic treatment for breast tumors and fibroids, both associated with excess estrogen, because the herbal version competes with excess estrogen, allowing the body to come into balance. The estrogenic effect may be of use in treating menopausal complaints. Research has shown that the herb has a contraceptive effect in sheep. Red clover blossoms have been long used in the form of a salve for the removal of external cancer and indolent ulcers. A tea is also helpful to bathe the affected part, making it fresh daily.

It reduces the desire to smoke if chewed.

Dosage: Pour a cup of boiling water onto 1-3 tsp of the dried herb and leave to infuse for 10-15 minutes. This should be drunk three times a day. Or take 2-6 ml of the tincture three times a day. Combines well with yellow dock and nettles for skin problems.

Remedies: Fresh flowers: crush the flowers and apply to insect bites and stings

Tincture: take internally for eczema and psoriasis

Compress: use for arthritic pains and gout

Ointment: for lymphatic swellings, cover fresh flowers with water and simmer in a slow cooker for 48 hours. Strain, discard herb and return liquid to the cleaned crockpot without lid for another 2-3 days or until the volume has been reduced to a black tar. Combine with an equal amount of ointment base (castor oil, glycerin or lanolin). Apply this sticky paste in liberal coats over lumps. Cover with cotton gauze or a soft, clean cloth; leave on one to two days or until the paste is mostly caked or unevenly dried; then remove most of herb paste by gently sponging warm water over area.

Reapply a fresh coat of paste and cover. This treatment is said to be best for reducing growths near the surface and has been used for benign breast lumps, lipomas, or malignant growths, including cancerous skin lesions. If you follow this procedure, drink one quart of red clover tea twice a day, up to 3 oz dried or 5 oz fresh flowers per quart. Some sources say that any estrogenic herb is unsafe in estrogen-dependent cancers, but further clarification is needed to differentiate between isolated estrogens tested on lab animals and research on humans using red clover.

Eyewash: use 5-10 drops tincture in 20 ml water or a well-strained infusion for conjunctivitis

Douche: use the infusion for vaginal itching

Syrup: take a syrup made from the infusion for stubborn, dry coughs

Solvent: boiling water, alcohol

Homeopathy: Tincture of the flower heads has been used for cancer, constipation, cough, mumps, problems of the pancreas, sore throat and pain in uvula. Homeopaths use *Trifolium pratense* for conditions characterized by increased flow of saliva, seborrhea with dry scaly crusts, stiff neck, whooping cough, hay fever and chills.

Formulas:

Yoni Tea: 2 parts red raspberry leaves, 1 part alfalfa, 1 part nettle leaf, 2 parts red clover, 1-2 parts peppermint. Pour 1 cup of hot steaming water over 2-3 tsp of the dried herbs and steep, covered, five to ten minutes. Drink warm or cool. Safe for pregnant and nursing women to drink on a daily basis.

Velvet Glove Tea: Minimizes or prevents thinning of the vaginal lining

4 oz lady's mantle herb, 3 oz red clover flower, 3 oz raspberry leaf, 2 oz rosemary flower, 2 oz linden flower, 1 oz yarrow flower. 15 oz will last 30 days. Add 1 oz of the mixture to 4 cups of boiling water in a container with a well-fitting lid. Let stand for 15 minutes and then

strain. Drink 1 cup hot or cold, three times a day. Drinking a quart a day brings quicker results; best results are seen in 2-3 months.

Crimson Clover Cough Syrup: 1 oz fresh or ½ oz dried red clover flowers, 1 cup hot water, 2 cups sugar. Place all ingredients in a pan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10-15 minutes. Strain, pour the liquid into a container and cap immediately. Store in a dark cool place and use 1 tsp as needed.

Essiac Tea

3 oz red clover flowers

3 oz wood sorrel flowers

3 oz common burdock root

1 oz kelp

1 oz slippery elm powder

1 oz Canada thistle head

Combine all the plants. Boil 1 tsp of the mixture in 1 cup water for 5 minutes. Drink 3 cups per day for 1-3 months. This is close to the original tea used to fight cancer. It is also an excellent lymphatic and blood depurative

Toxicity: Based on their constituents, red clover extracts may conceivably interfere with hormone treatments and anticoagulant drugs

Ritual Uses: Herbe of Immortalist and Protection. Red clover is used to bring protection and blessings to domestic animals. Clover blossoms are tinctured in vinegar for three days. The vinegar is then sprinkled around the house to discourage unwanted entities. Carry some flowers in your purse or pocket as a protective charm and to attract a new love. Finding a two-leafed clover means a lover will come to you again. The four-leafed clover brings peace of mind, psychic powers, money, and treasure and gives the possessor the ability to see fairies. The five-leafed clover brings money. To dream of clover foretells a happy marriage.

Cosmetic Uses: Its high honey content makes an infusion of the flowers soothing to a

chapped face.

Complexion Lotion: the high honey content makes an infusion of the flowers especially healing for skin made sore by wind or sun. Place a handful of flowers in a bowl and pour over them a pint of boiling water. Let stand for 10 minutes, strain and apply to the face with cotton pads and leave to dry.

Culinary Uses: Raw clover flowers are not easily digestible, especially when eaten in any quantity, but their sweet crunch is a nice addition to salad. They are excellent in salads, both green and sweet, and with vegetable dishes. It is worth picking the florets off individually to get the best flavor. Make sure that they have no green whatsoever attached to them. Scatter them over a salad or vegetable dish just before serving. Add them late in cooking to cheese, egg, rice and vegetable dishes and in soups and stews.

Recipes

Artichoke Hearts with Red Clovers and Cucumber Sauce

2 oz butter
1 ½ oz plain flour
¾ pint milk
¼ pint cream
a drop or two of Tabasco sauce
1 Tbsp dill, chopped
1 cucumber, diced, with or without the skin
freshly ground salt and black pepper
4 artichoke hearts, fresh or canned, cut in half
1 crisp lettuce, shredded
6 clover heads, divided into individual florets with green bits removed

Melt the butter in a saucepan, add the flour, stirring until it is absorbed, and cook for two minutes. Gradually stir in the milk and the cream, the Tabasco and the dill. Mix thoroughly and add the diced cucumber, simmering for a few minutes. Check for seasoning, adding salt and freshly ground pepper to taste. Then add the artichoke hearts. Arrange lettuce leaves on each plate and place a

spoonful of the mixture in the center, making sure there is an artichoke heart in each portion. Scatter clover florets and serve.

Clover Soup

2 cups clover blossoms
2 Tbsp chive flower butter
3 medium potatoes, cut into 1-inch cubes (Yukon gold give great color)
¼ cup tahini
1 quart water
¼ cup sesame seeds, toasted

In a heavy saucepan, sauté the clover blossoms in the chive flower butter. Do not let the blossoms brown. Add the potatoes and tahini and sauté for several minutes more. Add the water, cover and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes. For a thicker soup, puree half of the soup in a food processor or blender, then return to the pot. Garnish with clover florets and toasted sesame seeds. (Edible Flowers from Garden to Palate)

Green and Yellow Squash with Red Clover Flowers

2 green zucchini
2 yellow squash
1 tsp olive oil
1 clove of garlic, crushed
salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 Tbsp clover flowers separated into florets

Wash the squash and top and tail them. Put them into a large pan of boiling water and boil for four minutes. Remove from the heat, drain and slice. In a clean pan heat the olive oil, add the garlic and the squash, and toss gently, seasoning to taste. Arrange in a serving dish, scatter with the clover florets and serve.

Red Clover Wine

2 quarts clover blossoms
1 gallon water
juice of 3 lemons
juice of 2 oranges
5 cups sugar
1 packet of yeast

Pick the clover blossoms when they are well out but before they start to go brown, and put them in a plastic bucket. Bring the water to a boil, pour it over the flowers, and add the fruit juices. Put the yeast in a glass with a little sugar, and set it near a radiator. By the time the water has cooled to lukewarm the yeast will have started and can be stirred into the bucket. Cover the bucket with cheesecloth and allow the must to ferment for 5 days. Strain it into a jar, seal with an airlock, and let it ferment until it has entirely stopped working. Rack it off into a clear jar, let it stand until it has completely settled out, and then bottle. Alternatively, as you rack the wine off its sediment, put it through a fine filter and bottle immediately. The wine will be white and if you ferment it in a rather warm room, may be a little too dry. If this is the case, a tiny amount of sugar syrup will sweeten it nice. Can be drunk immediately. (Wild Foods)

Red Clover Salad with Rose Dressing

1 head Boston lettuce
¼ lb cherries, washed and stoned
Tear lettuce into bite-size pieces and put in salad bowl. Arrange cherries over top of lettuce. Spoon the Rose dressing over
Rose Dressing
¾ cup safflower or olive oil
1/3 cup red wine vinegar
1 clove garlic, minced
½ tsp salt
3 Tbsp lemon juice
30 red clover flowers
½ cup rose petals

Beat together oil, vinegar, garlic, salt and lemon juice in a large bowl. Mix in clover flowers and rose petals. Set aside for 30 minutes (Recipes from Riversong)

Red Clover Salad

4 chicory leaves
4 leaves mustard greens
4 Swiss chard leaves
4 ruby lettuce leaves
4 nasturtium leaves

2 springs flat-leaved or Italian parsley
2 wild onions, finely chopped
petals from 6 wild roses
16 clover flowers
Dressing:
2 tsp Dijon mustard
¼ cup vinegar
¾ cup olive oil
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp pepper

Blend the mustard and vinegar with a wire whisk, then add the oil drop by drop, whisking continuously, so that the ingredients emulsify. Finally add the salt and pepper and whisk again. Place all the salad ingredients in a large bowl and toss thoroughly with the dressing. (Wild Foods)

Clover Corn Bread

3 Tbsp vinegar
½ cup oil
2 eggs
1 ½ cups apple juice
1 Tbsp concentrated sweetener (fruit juice concentrate, honey or maple syrup)
1 cup barley or whole-wheat flour
2 cups cornmeal
1 cup finely chopped dried or fresh clover flowers
1 tsp salt
1 tsp cream of tartar
2 ½ tsp baking soda

Mix the vinegar, oil, eggs, juice and sweetener. In a bowl combine the flour, cornmeal, clover, salt, cream of tartar, and baking salt. Add the liquid. Place in an oiled baking pan. Bake at 300F for 20 to 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. (Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild (and Not So Wild) Places)

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