

## **Red clover (Ch 8 pg 174)**

*Trifolium pratense* L.

### **Background**

- The most commonly planted forage legume after alfalfa
- Grown widely across the U.S. to lower Canada
- Mediterranean origin

### **Soil Fertility**

- Prefers near neutral pH (for nodulation)
- Requires large quantities of K and medium quantities of P (especially when cut for hay/silage)
- widely distributed - usually nodulates naturally from free-living Rhizobia
- Best-adapted to deep, well-drained, highly fertility soils

### **Quality**

- Highly palatable forage
- High quality if harvested before full bloom (typically harvest at 20% bloom)
- Stems and flower are more digestible than alfalfa

### **Advantages**

- High yielding and good quality (hairs can make hay dusty)
- Good seedling vigor - easy to establish
- Deep tap root - moderate drought tolerance
- Recovers rapidly after harvest

### **Disadvantages**

- Low productivity and stand persistence on poorly drained soils
- Requires high soil pH
- no vegetative spread - stands will thin after 2-4 years
- not very well suited for grazing (tends to disappear from stands after 2-4 years)

### **Identification**

- Trifoliate leaves, distinctive red flower
- Pubescent (very hairy)
- "water-mark" on the leaflets
- Grows from a crown once established

### **Agronomy**

- typically planted at 8-12 lb/ac
- Susceptible to a number of diseases, but none have economic control options
- Crowns are susceptible to damage (which shortens stand life) so avoid grazing (treading) and traffic when soil is soft
- old varieties are: Cinnamon, Mammoth
- most new varieties are tetraploid, e.g. Starfire