

Red Clover

Trifolium Pratense
“three leaf growing in meadows”



Personal Connection:

Why red clover?

Even as a child I was drawn to the vibrant pink/purple petals contrasting the green leaves and the chevron leaf pattern gave the appearance of eyes, which I have always been intrigued by and often include in my art. I saw it often growing up in Colorado, as well as in the movie Bambi. I used to eat it while playing or hiking through meadows and want to know more about it and why I've been drawn to it since a young age.



Personal experience in using this herb?

I recently made a vinegar using the upper leaves+flower and apple cider vinegar, and use it frequently on salads with a bit of avocado oil and it is delicious! Previously, I have eaten and seen red clover in abundance in meadows and on hiking trails in Colorado and find it very tasty. I also recently purchased a tincture for PMS cramps, however I have yet to use it.

Background:

Family:

Fabacea (also known as Leguminosae aka the pea family)

Common Names:

red clover, cow clover, meadow clover, wild clover, trefoil, purple clover, treble morado

Origin:

Found across South East Europe to Central and North Asia to North Africa to the Mediterranean, to the Arctic Circle, red clover is used in many traditional medicine practices including Ayurveda, TCM, Russian and Pagan traditional medicine

Where it Grows:

meadows, open forests, field borders, paths, yards, anywhere with disturbed soil

It is a common “weed” and crop farmers/cattle farmers plant it as a ground cover, food for cattle and a sustainable soil enricher. Brought to North+South Americas by settlers it has since been naturalized in these regions as well.





Trifolium pratense L.

Description:

Red clover is a short annual, biennial or short-lived perennial.

It has a long tap root that shoots up an upright, hairy, hollow stem about 1-2 feet high with three leaves grouped together (trifolium), each with a light/white chevron pattern on each leaflet and a burst of purple/pink petals.

The petals have the common flower parts of the Fabaceae family, including the banner, wings and keel.

Doctrine of Signatures (the color and shape of flowers reveal properties of the plant)

- color red is often associated with blood purifying and fever-busting benefits
- “the color may also suggest the astringency or healing effect of a plant in external or skin disorders arising from blood impurities” -Ben Charles Harris

Harvesting:

When to Harvest: Red clover blooms Spring to Summer (May-September) and is best when harvested 1-2 weeks after full bloom (usually mid Summer). Harvest in the morning when it's still dewy to prevent browning (do not harvest if the petals have begun browning or the leaves have a powdery mildew on them). It can be harvested up to 3 times a year before being dug back into the earth.

What to Harvest: Aerial parts of the plant (top most trifoliate and flowering head); roots can be harvested and eaten if cooked

Processing & Preparation:

How to Process: Use fresh, or dry herbs in dark, warm, ventilated, and dry place. Ensure that the blossoms are spaced out and not touching each other, and turn frequently while drying for about 1-2 weeks and then use immediately (don't want the flowers to brown).



Uses: wild snack, raw in salads or cooked in a stir fry, hot tea or cold decoction, nutritive mineral vinegar, tincture, capsules, jelly, infused wine; can be used externally as a wash or a poultice can be made by adding some water and applying directly to affected area

Herbal Medicine:

Energetics: cooling, drying, slightly sedative (think Vata)

Taste: bitter, sweet, salty

Properties: alterative, diuretic, expectorant, antispasmodic, nutritive, lymphatic, blood tonic, anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, estrogenic, antitussive

Therapeutic Uses:

- Red clover is a source of many nutrients including calcium, chromium, magnesium, niacin, phosphorus, potassium, thiamine, and vitamin C. Red clover is a rich source of isoflavones (chemicals that act like estrogens and are found in many plants). Red clover is nutritive to the human body as well as the soil (takes nitrogen from the atmosphere and enriches the soil) and therefore to the crops that are grown in that soil, which eventually become the food we eat.
 - supports eliminative organs in the body
 - used to treat cold, flu, bronchitis, and whooping cough
 - reduces respiratory irritability, counteracts fevers and inflamed lungs
 - used to treat skin issues: eczema, psoriasis, acne, eruptions
 - the mild blood-thinning chemicals (coumarins) and the herb's hormone-like nourishing qualities may improve micro-circulation and bring more moisture and nutrition to the skin cells. it is also a lymph cleanser and exhibits mild anti-bacterial activity against gram-positive organisms
 - used for hormone imbalances, estrogen receptor modulation, ease menopause+PMS symptoms, reduces depressive and anxiety symptoms among postmenopausal women, isoflavones may slow bone loss and even boost bone mineral density in pre- and perimenopausal women, used for treating breast health, lowering cholesterol, and increasing urination and blood circulation
 - one of the richest sources of isoflavones, which are water-soluble chemicals that act like estrogens
 - supports cardiovascular health
 - increases HDL (good) cholesterol, detoxifies the blood and improves blood flow
 - used for inflammatory conditions associated with arthritis and gout
 - potential psychological benefits for women
 - extensive traditional and historical use for treating or slowing cancer
 - lymphatic and blood purifier
 - currently being researched and remains unclear through a Western medicine perspective
 - researchers have found that isoflavones help in stopping cancer cells from multiplying and growing (especially for cancer cells related to hormonal changes, such as breast, endometrial and prostate) but because of the herb's estrogen-like effects, it might also contribute to the growth of some cancers, just as estrogen does
 - plays a prominent role in several famous anti-cancer remedies, including Essiac and the Hoxsey Formula
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Herbal Pairs: dandelion root, burdock root, chickweed, nettles, raspberry leaf, horse tail, yellow dock, white peony root, thyme turmeric

Pair with moistening herbs for spasmodic coughs: mallows, licorice, violet etc.

Balance energetics with the individuals constitution and the personal ailment/issue, can be used with other alteratives, other lymphatics/skin herbs, or other liver herbs.

Safety: People who have been diagnosed with breast cancer should not use red clover without discussing it with their physician. Red clover may increase the effects of estrogen or should be avoided if you have a known hormone-sensitive condition. Pregnant or breastfeeding women should not take red clover. Red clover may increase the risk of bleeding, especially if taking blood-thinning pharmaceuticals or with the herb melilot (Melilotus officinalis). Red clover may interfere with tamoxifen. Red clover may interfere with the body's ability to process some drugs that are broken down by liver enzymes so check with your physician before taking it. Because red clover side effects may include slow blood clotting, stop taking it at least two weeks prior to surgery, and avoid if you have Protein S deficiency or any other type of coagulation disorder.

Dosage: Don't have to be shy with red clover!

Dried herb (used for tea): 1 to 3 tsp dried flowers or flowering tops steeped in 8 oz. hot water for 15-30 minutes; drink 2 to 3 cups daily

Tincture (1:5, 30% alcohol): 60 to 100 drops (3 to 5 mL), 3 times per day; may add to hot water as a tea

Can be used as a tonic, can be added to daily diet as a nutritive alterative



Fun Facts & Folklore:

- “To be in clover” is to be living a carefree life of ease, comfort and prosperity. Most likely stemming from the fact that cows grew fat eating clover.
- In Irish iconography, the word “shamrock” translates to “young springs of clover”. It is the symbol of St. Patrick used to illustrate the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in the Catholic religion.
- The ancient Greeks and Romans associated it with their triple Goddesses and the Celts considered it a sacred symbol of the Sun. It is the national flower of Ireland and the symbol for Vermont, USA
- In Ancient China the plant was used as incense and burned at alters. It was considered a sacred plant by many cultures and thought to bring good luck, prosperity and health to all who wore it.
- Protects soil from erosion
- Red clover reduces the need for mineral nitrogen fertilizer by 91% and reduces the need for herbicide use by 95%
- In folk magic Red Clover is used in a ritual bath to attract money and prosperity to the bather and is also used as a floor wash to chase out evil and unwanted ghosts
- The four-leaf clover is believed to protect from evil spirits, witches, disease and the evil eye
- The four-leaf clover was said to enable its wearer to ward off evil and witches, to see fairies and various spirits, to heal illnesses, to have good fortune, and to escape military service. The five-leaf clover was said to be unlucky and the two-leaf clover was to enable a maid to see her future lover.
- With its three leaves, Clover is a very shamanic plant allowing one to see into and interact with the Otherworld. It is a good talisman for protection and power for travelling out of body and walking between worlds.
- Washing the face in Red Clover in the morning dew is said to prevent freckles.

*One leaf for fame, one leaf for wealth,
One for a faithful lover,
And one leaf to bring glorious health,
Are all in a four-leaf clover*



Resources:

<http://pennstatehershey.adam.com/content.aspx?productId=107&pid=33&gid=000270>

<https://theherbalacademy.com/red-clover-tea/>

<https://www.chrysalisnaturalmedicine.com/red-clover-blossom-trifolium-pratense/>

Marsden Farm Research from the documentary Sustainable, Directed by Matt Wechsler

<https://www.whiterabbitinstituteofhealing.com/herbs/clover/>

<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/redclover/ata glance.htm>

The Yoga of Herbs (second revised and enlarged edition) An Ayurvedic Guide to Herbal Medicine by Dr. David Frawley and Dr. Vasant Lad

https://www.rjwhelan.co.nz/herbs%20A-Z/red_clover.html

http://wightdruids.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=137&Itemid=153

<https://www.herbalremediesadvice.org/red-clover-benefits.html>

<https://www.herbalremediesadvice.org/red-clover-uses.html>

