

CLOSER TO CLOVER

A clover lawn, well why not? Consider clover as a wonderful low maintenance option planted by itself, among perennials or blended with turf.

Although clover is not quite as uniform in colour or form as traditional grass, the soft texture is comparable. Clover lawns provide a lush green carpet for kids to play on without adding pesticides or fertilizer.

Nitrogen Fixation

White clover (*Trifolium repens*) is a leguminous plant. It takes nitrogen from the air and converts it from a gas state into round solid nodules. These nodules form on the clovers' roots and slowly release the nitrogen into the soil for free organic fertilizer. Perfect!

There are always places in your garden where the grass doesn't grow well (because of soil compaction or dryness). In these problem areas, we can seed clover as a lovely lawn alternative. Over-seed clover lawns in early spring when the nights are still frosty. If the soil is dry, water the seeds with a light spray. In a wet spring with lots of rain, you may not need to water at all.

Clover's ability to withstand drought is exceptional! Black clover (*Trifolium repens* 'Atropurpureum') is a terrific variety to try with gorgeous dark purple almost black foliage outlined by a green margin. The white flowers of the black clover appear in June.

Less Maintenance

What makes a clover lawn so attractive? In the heat of August, when the majority of lawns are brown and patchy, the clover will be green and fresh without a lot of watering, mowing or fertilizing. After all, it contains nitrogen within the nodules. An added bonus: the clover lawn will not turn yellow when your dog decides to do his business! Imagine your children playing in a pesticide free space without weeds. Clover will

smother out and dominate the weedy areas. You can save your weeding work for the perennial beds!

Bee Warned

Bees love the flowers of the most common white clover variety. However, if you keep your mowing height low the flower buds will be removed consistently, eliminating the bees. This is the only downside with white clover lawns.

Clover seed may be purchased at garden centres, usually located near the grass seed or ordered from seed catalogues. Try it between rows of vegetables for the added nutrients or where your turf is not thriving. Clover lawns are a wonderful eco-friendly grass alternative for your garden.

Marilyn Pomer is a landscape designer for Greenscape Designs Inc. If you have any questions or comments please email Marilyn at marilyn@greenscape.ca