

Sweet Clover

Melilotus alba, M. officinalis

Description: Both species of sweet clover are biennial and grow 3-5 feet high. They are either yellow or white and can have a bush-like form, although yellow clover may grow slightly smaller and bloom earlier than white clover. Leaves are alternate and compound in groups of 3, with small teeth around the edges and oval or elliptical in shape. Stems are smooth and may be grooved. Flowers are clustered in spike-like racemes up to 8 inches long. Seeds stay viable in the soil for 30 years.

Ecological Threat: Sweet clover can outcompete native plants on high-quality sites by overtopping and shading them. It also spreads quickly on disturbed sites and roadsides. Fire can stimulate seed germination.

Control Methods:

Mechanical- Hand-pulling can be effective, as well as cutting before the flowers emerge. Burning can be effective if a proper pattern is followed.

Chemical- Spray emergent seedlings after a fall or spring burn before native plants emerge.

