

PLANTING COOL SEASON LEGUMES FOR FORAGE AND BIOMASS

MS-ECS-512-08 (JS)
June 2013

Mississippi

White clover is a perennial legume that grows best in north Mississippi. It is adapted to a wide range of soil types. White clover is usually used in perennial grass mixes such as tall fescue, bermudagrass, bahiagrass, or dallisgrass. Do not seed with small grains or ryegrass unless you want white clover to remain as a perennial. White clover should be planted between September 1 to October 15 at a depth of 1/4 inch. White clover can be planted on a prepared seedbed or sodseeded into pastures that have been grazed down to two inches or less at a seeding rate of 3 pounds per acre.

Red clover is a biennial legume that grows best on silty or clay soils in north Mississippi. Red clover will volunteer from seed if allowed to seed the second year. Red clover can be seeded into perennial grass alone or mixed with white clover at a seeding rate of 8 pounds of red clover seed per acre alone or 5 pounds of red clover seed per acre when mixed with white clover. Red clover can also be seeded with winter annual grasses in combination with crimson clover at the rate of 5 pounds of red clover seed per acre. Plant between September 1 and October 15 at a depth of 1/4 inch.

Crimson clover is an annual reseeding clover that can be grown throughout Mississippi. It is adapted to a wide variety of soils. Crimson clover can be sodseeded into perennial grasses if the grasses are grazed down to two inches or less. Crimson clover is also used in combination with winter annual grasses. Plant 20 pounds of seed per acre at a depth of 1/4 inch. Plant between September 1 and October 15. To allow crimson clover to reseed, do not graze after April 15 to May 1, depending on the flowering date of the clover.

Arrowleaf clover is an annual reseeding clover. Arrowleaf does not provide early fall grazing but will provide longer spring and early summer grazing than most annual clovers. Best uses for arrowleaf clover is sodseeding or overseeding in summer perennials. If reseeding is desired, restrict grazing for three to four weeks after first bloom appears. You can graze again after seeds have matured. Plant 10 pounds of seed per acre sodseeded or 15 pounds of seed per acre broadcast. Plant 1/4 inch deep between September 1 and October 15. Avoid planting on high calcareous soils or wet soils.

Subterranean clover is an annual clover that has a growing season similar to crimson. Sub clover produces seed at the soil surface, hence it can tolerate close grazing and still reseed. Plant 20 pounds of seed per acre and cover to a depth of 1/4 inch. Plant between August 25 and October 15.

Ball clover is an annual clover that has a very short production season during the spring. If reseeding is desired, reduce grazing pressure in May. Bloat can be a problem. Ball cover is best suited to southwest Mississippi. Plant three (3) pounds of seed per acre at a depth of 1/4 inch between September 1 and October 15.

Hairy vetch and wild winter peas are viney winter annuals best suited to well drained soils. Both vetch and peas do well in the Blackland Prairie and brown loam soil areas. They are more suited as a companion crop with cereal grains or lightly grazed tall fescue. Plant 30 pounds of seed per acre alone or 20 pounds of seed per acre in mixtures between September 1 and October 15. Plant at a depth of 1/4 inch for peas or 1/2 inch for vetch. Do not begin grazing until the plants are at least six (6) inches tall. Close grazing will destroy buds needed for regrowth. If planting primarily for grazing, plant vetch since peas are easily damaged by trampling.

NOTE: All legume seed should be inoculated with a specific rizobia bacteria at planting.

NOTE: Apply fertilizer and lime according to Extension Service Soils Lab recommendations or the attached nutrient budget.

TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

NRCS, Mississippi