

CLOVER IN THE LAWN

The debate rages on over clover in the lawn. Many people are not concerned about this, while some encourage it and others will do all they can to eliminate it from their lawns.

What Is Clover?

Clover (*Trifolium repens* or *Trifolium fragiferam*), is distinguished by its leaves with three leaflets, creeping stems that set down roots at any point where they touch the ground and display either white or pink flowers. Clover is considered a common weed and this is where things get tricky. Not everyone agrees.



Why Some People Don't Mind Clover?

Before the 1960s, when herbicides became readily available, the optimum lawn contained about 20% of clover. Many older gardeners are shocked at the fact that many go out of their way to eliminate clover from their lawn. In fact, in years gone by lawn mixtures were judged for their quality, by the percentage of clover they contained and the more clover, the better the mixture.

- Clover stays green during drought and in the coldest of climates.
- It is resistant to grubs and other pests that feed on grass roots.
- Provides shade for the grass roots themselves.
- Helps fertilise the grass by fixing nitrogen from the air and adding it to the soil.
- Clover also attracts bees, important for the pollination of other plants and flowers, particularly fruits and vegetables.
- It is low growing and requires little mowing.
- Soft to walk on.
- Masks the presence of other weeds in the lawn.

For these reasons, many people don't mind and actually encourage the growth of clover in their lawn.



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Then There are Those Who Don't Want it in Their Lawn.

On the other side of the debate, there are those who deem clover to be an unwanted and opportunistic weed and will try to ensure that it doesn't take hold in their yard.

Clover will thrive in a lawn with low fertility and low nitrogen levels. You can avoid 60 -70% of clover by fertilising your lawn properly, during the warmer months and making sure that the nitrogen levels are at their optimum level. There is nothing clover likes more than a poorly fertilised lawn. Conduct a pH soil test at home or take a soil sample to your local lawn care provider or garden centre to determine if nitrogen is lacking in your soil.

How to Eliminate Clover?

Clover is a winter germinating weed, so it will tend to die off when the extremes of an Australian summer hit. It is also an annual and therefore dies after one season; the problem lies in the fact that it does reseed itself, so therefore it will continue to come back.

You can treat clover with a selective herbicide, but you must use the correct product for your type of lawn. Bromoxynil and MCPA target broadleaf weeds in Buffalo lawns. Dicamba targets broadleaf weeds in Kikuyu and Couch lawns. With all herbicides it is essential that you read the manufacturer's instructions carefully and follow the application directions exactly. If you are unsure of the type of lawn that you have or if you suspect that your yard may be made up of different lawn varieties, it is recommended that you apply the herbicide to a small section of your lawn and leave it for a few weeks to see how it performs.

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