

Crimson Clover

*Dennis W. Hancock,
Extension Forage Agronomist,
Crop and Soil Sciences Department*

AT-A-GLANCE

Adaptation: Coastal Plain and lower Piedmont. Fairly tolerant of soil acidity but does not tolerate poor drainage.

Establishment: Seed drilled 15-20 lb/A or broadcast at 20 to 30 lb/A in September-October.

Varieties: Dixie. Also, Flame, AU-Robin, Chief, and Tibbee, but their seed may be limited. AU Robin and Flame produce more winter growth than the old variety Dixie. Tibbee and Chief may also provide satisfactory results.

Crimson clover is an excellent winter annual legume and often serves as a benchmark by which other cool season annual legumes are compared. Crimson furnishes some grazing in late fall and winter and abundant grazing in early spring. Crimson matures (flowers) earlier in spring than the other annual clovers, produces high yields even in cool winters, and has a shorter grazing season. Several varieties are now available that mature very early. This allows it to grow, be utilized, add biologically-fixed N to the soil, and die with minimal competition with warm season perennial grasses. It grows best on well-drained soils and is frequently used in mixtures with ryegrass and small grains for winter grazing. It is also commonly used to overseed bermudagrass and bahiagrass pastures. Unfortunately, crimson produces relatively few hard seed and its seed heads are often damaged by clover head weevils. As a result, crimson clover usually does not reseed well in a grazing system.

Establishment of Crimson Clover

Crimson clover can either be established on a prepared seedbed or they can be overseeded on warm season perennial grass pastures. Planting with a drill (using the small seed box) or by broadcasting the legume seed can result in satisfactory stands. However, the seeding rate needs to be adjusted to compensate for the differences in these planting methods. Information on broadcasting legume seed is detailed in Factsheet CSS-F004 “Seeding Methods for Small-Seeded Legumes.”



Crimson Clover (*T. incarnatum*)

When planting into dormant warm season grass sod, one or more legumes may be used to achieve a solid legume stand. When planted in a prepared seedbed, one or more of these legumes are often mixed with a small grain crop or ryegrass. Seeding rates for crimson clover when used in such mixtures will need to be adjusted to minimize seed costs and prevent excessive competition (Table 1).

Planting too deep is not usually a problem when legumes are broadcast on dormant warm season perennial grass sod. However, when the legumes (especially small-seeded species) are being drilled or broadcast onto a prepared seedbed, special care should be taken to ensure that the legume seeds are not planted more than ¼ - ½ inches deep (see the Factsheet CSS-F004 “Seeding Methods for Small-Seeded Legumes”). Large-seeded legumes such as lupine or common vetch can be planted up to 1 in. deep.

Table 1. Seeding rate of crimson clover when broadcast, drilled, or planted with a cultipacker-seeder (CPS).

Legume Species	Method[†]	Seeding Rate (lbs of pure live seed per acre)
Crimson clover	Broadcast	20-30
	Drilled or CPS	15-20

[†]CPS: cultipacker-seeder.



The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating. Cooperative Extension, the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, gender or disability.

An Equal Opportunity Employer/Affirmative Action Organization Committed to a Diverse Work Force