

## Green Manures No. TGM10

White sweetclover, *Melilotus alba*

*Green manures are plants that are grown mainly for the benefit of the soil. They can be grown as part of a rotation or in an intercropping system to build soil fertility, or as a cover crop to protect bare soil from erosion. Full details on the benefits and practice of using green manures can be found in HDRA's booklet 'Green manures/Cover crops'.*

*Melilotus alba* is also known as hubam or white melilot.



### Growing conditions

- Annual rainfall: White sweetclover does well with 300mm to 1600mm rainfall.
- Altitude: It can grow up to 2000m.
- Temperature: It tolerates temperatures of 6° C to 24° C.
- Soil type: pH as near to neutral (pH 7) as possible. It is sensitive to acid soils.

### Nitrogen fixation

White sweetclover is a legume. This means that it has nodules on its roots which contain bacteria. These bacteria take nitrogen from the air. This is known as nitrogen fixation. The plant uses this to grow and when the legume is dug into the soil, the extra nitrogen is made available to the next crop.

### Cultivation

Broadcast seeds at a rate of 11-25kg per hectare, seeds should be scarified. Dig in at any time prior to flowering. It is important to avoid the stems becoming woody as this will be more difficult to dig in and break down. Woody stems are also unpalatable for animals.

## **Growth form**

White sweetclover is an annual or biennial, erect herb. Stems reach 1m in height.

## **Recommended application**

Use white sweetclover as cover crop/green manure to suppress weeds, add fertility and control erosion. It is useful if seeded along with a grain crop to allow time to establish while the grain crop matures.

## **Human food**

It is not suitable for human consumption but is very useful for animal fodder.

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