

Green Manures No. TGM17

Egyptian clover, *Trifolium alexandrinum*

Green manures are plants which 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'.

Egyptian clover is also known as berseem clover



Growing conditions

- Annual rainfall: Egyptian clover requires 380mm to 1660mm of rainfall.
- Temperature: It requires temperatures of 7° C to 27° C. 17° C is required for vigorous growth.
- Soil type: It tolerates a range of soils from pH 4.9 to 7.8. It is tolerant of moist and dry soils. It does not do well on sandy soils.

Nitrogen fixation

Egyptian clover 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

Sow Egyptian clover at a rate of 17-22kg/ha. Broadcast the seeds and cover them to a depth of 1cm to 2cm. Then roll them in or firm the seeds down to conserve moisture.

Egyptian clover should be inoculated if sown for the first time. Commercial white clover inoculants is effective.

Growth form

The Egyptian clover is a low spreading annual.

Recommended application

It is grown as an annual cover crop /green manure, to suppress weeds, add fertility and control erosion. For intensive or long fallows it can be cut to 3-5cm height leaving the cut material on the soil surface. It is recommended to cut before flowering. It will then regrow and can be cut again.

Human food

Egyptian clover is not suitable as human food.

Animal food

It is very useful for animal fodder. It's production, palatability and longevity are considered excellent.

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