

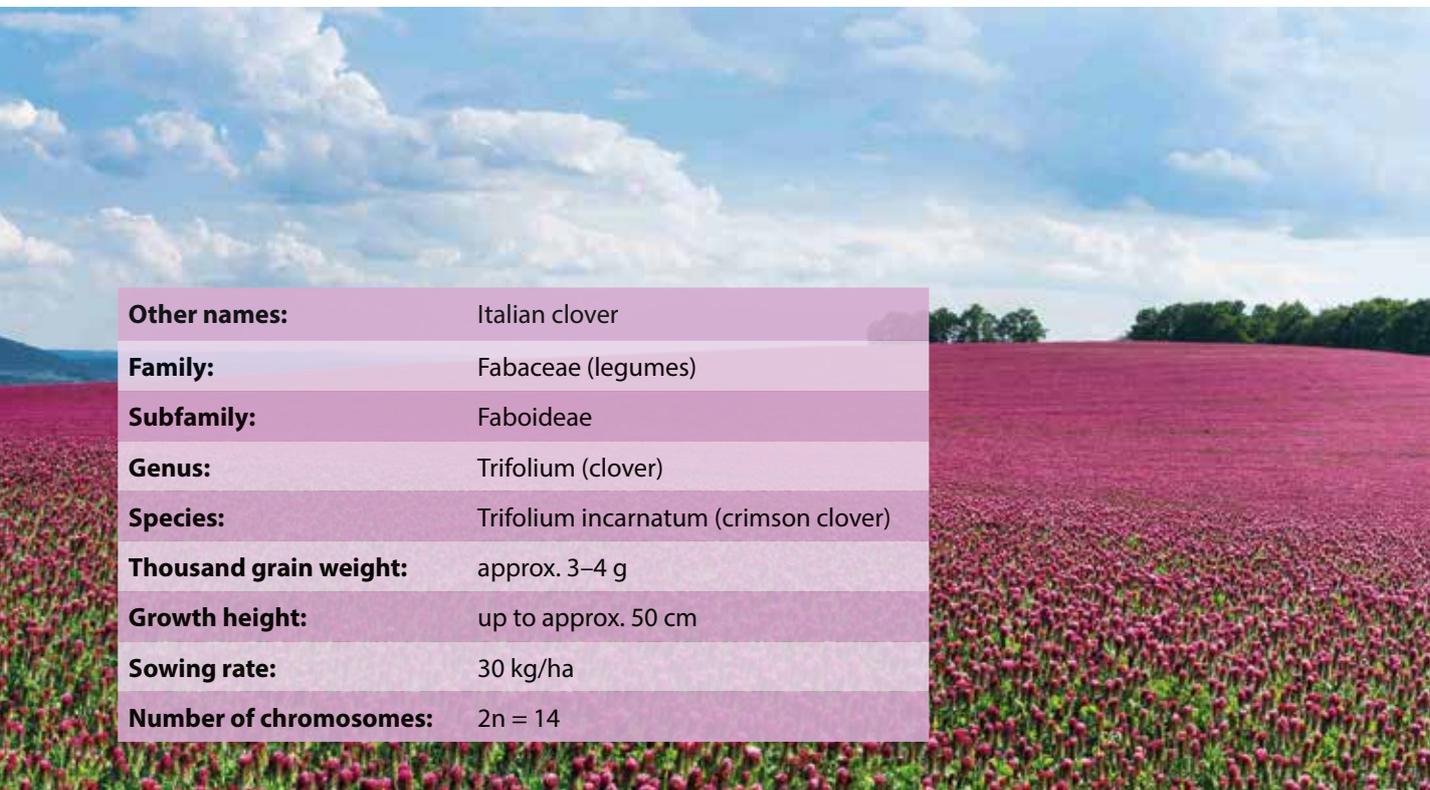
Crimson clover

Trifolium incarnatum

In focus



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Other names:	Italian clover
Family:	Fabaceae (legumes)
Subfamily:	Faboideae
Genus:	Trifolium (clover)
Species:	Trifolium incarnatum (crimson clover)
Thousand grain weight:	approx. 3–4 g
Growth height:	up to approx. 50 cm
Sowing rate:	30 kg/ha
Number of chromosomes:	2n = 14

A pure stand of crimson clover

Description

Crimson clover is an annual or biennial herbaceous plant that reaches a height of up to 50 cm. It is sensitive to black frost and trampling. The stalk is mostly protruding, or in rare cases flattened and villous. The stalk is upright and sparsely branched at most. The alternate leaves arranged spirally on the stalk are divided into petioles and lamina. The petiole is 5 to 18 cm long. The lamina is tripartite and especially large for a clover. The hairy pinnae are oval in shape, 1 to 2 cm long and 1 to 1.5 cm wide with a cuneate base. The edges of the pinnae are slightly ridged, the tip is rounded

or slightly crenate. The lower leaves have long stems. The membrane-like stipules continue downwards like a leaf sheath and grow together with the petiole up to three-fifths of their length; the free part is green or purple and, depending on the characteristics, either oval, serrate or costate and with protruding hairs. As a leguminous plant, crimson clover is also able to have a symbiotic relationship with rhizobia that converts atmospheric nitrogen into a plant-available form. The reddish nodules on the roots indicate the active symbiosis.



Crimson clover plant with roots



Rhizobia root nodules

Origin and history

Crimson clover originally comes from the western Mediterranean region. Its natural distribution extends from the Iberian Peninsula to France, Italy and the Balkans right up to the Bosphorus. Initially, it was cultivated on both sides of the Pyrenees range and possibly in northern Italy as well. Today, crimson clover is grown in Europe, northwards to Great Britain and eastwards to the Caucasus. Other areas of cultivation include North and South America as well as Australia and New Zealand.

Because of its global use as fodder plant, there are many new appearances whose establishment greatly depends on climatic conditions. Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Chile and the USA have played the most important role in propagating crimson clover. In 2018, Germany had about 76 ha of propagation fields for crimson clover.



Original seed size

