

Sowing & Growing: Balansa Clover



Balansa clover (*trifolium michelianum*) is a winter hardy, annual legume. It is extremely productive in nitrogen fixing. The flowers bloom in early summer. They vary from white to pink in colour and are attractive to bees. Balansa clover can tolerate a variety of soils. Their deep tap root can help soil drainage and water infiltration. It can be combined with other annual or short term species like westerwold ryegrass or Italian ryegrass.

When to Sow: Due to the winter hardiness, balansa clover suits a spring or autumn sowing, surviving the winter unlike many annual clovers. This can be a useful trait for over-winter green manures and forage.

Sowing Rate: 1.0 g/m², 4kg per acre - 10kg per ha.

Preparation: The most successful results come from sowing into a newly prepared seedbed. Aim to cultivate the top soil to about 5cm, with a light cultivator or discs. The finished seedbed should be fine but firm, with no clods. Several passes with a cultivator may be needed to achieve this.

Sowing: Clover seed is small and should be broadcast or drilled to a shallow depth (no more than 10mm). Sowing too deep will reduce the germination dramatically. The soil should be rolled after sowing to increase seed to soil contact. Adapting to a range of soils, it will grow on light and heavier land and has shown some resilience to short term water logging.

Management: Balansa clover is usually only cut once and may be cut high at an early stage if annual weed control is required. If cut at full flowering there will be little regrowth, often killing off the plant.

Early autumn sowings can last through the winter but be aware the lifespan of the plant is only about 6 months, so spring sowing may naturally die away in late summer once the plant has finished flowering.

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