

SHOULD YOU MOVE OVER TO CLOVER?

Tony Koski, PhD | CSU Extension Turfgrass Specialist

I often get asked about seeding "mini clover" into lawns or having clover lawns in Colorado. The people asking have heard about clover's ability (well, actually it's a bacteria living in the clover plant's roots that does it) to "fix" nitrogen from the atmosphere--meaning that a clover-containing lawn won't need to be fertilized like grass lawns. This is true! And clover flowers are highly attractive to honey bees and other pollinators, providing many months of nectar-producing blooms through the spring and summer. Clover is also very cold hardy and will tolerate a good amount of kid and dog traffic--though it will leave bright green stains on kids clothing. Clover is not particularly drought resistant and does best in full sun. Because it is damaged by herbicides, it's best not to use weed control products on a clover-containing lawn. Clover lawns like regular irrigation (once or twice weekly when it's hot).

Thanks to the development (by Dutch breeders) of what is known as "micro" or "mini" clover, there is growing interest in planting this less obtrusive clover in lawns. However, this clover stays "mini" ONLY if mowed frequently; if not mowed, it will grow tall and look like regular white clover.

If you don't view clover as a weed and want to try planting it in an existing lawn (use about 1 pound of seed per 1,000 square feet), here are some online sources of seed for a micro clover variety called 'Pipolina' (it's a bit spendy, at \$20-30 per pound).

- Outside Pride: outsidepride.com/seed/clover-seed/miniclover.html
- Seed World: seedworldusa.com/products/micro-clover-seed

If you want something less expensive and don't mind larger and taller clover leaves and flowers, try planting Dutch white clover (\$3-10 per pound online and from local grass seed companies).

