

Bird's-foot trefoil

Lotus corniculatus

Description

Used in agriculture as a forage plant, grown for pasture, hay, and silage.

Habit

Perennial, low growing, fine-stemmed, leafy, ranges from 6-24 inches in height; deep, branched root system; 3 ft taproot and secondary roots from rhizomes.

Leaves

Clover-like, pinnately compound, alternate, and consist of three oval leaflets and two smaller leaflet-like stipules that grow at the base of the leaf stalk.

Stems

Erect, nearly square, emerge from a single root crown and have many branches that can become tangled and matted.

Flowers

Bright yellow in color, sometimes streaked with





red, 0.5 in long, borne in flat-topped clusters of 3-6 at the end of stems; blooms from June to frost.

Fruits and Seeds

Seeds are in clusters, brown to black in color, slender, cylindrical, resembles a bird's foot and contains 10-20 seeds that eject when mature.

Habitat

Native to Eurasia and North Africa. Found along roadsides, waste areas, fields, prairies, wildlife openings, and open disturbed areas.

Reproduction

By seeds, rhizomes and above ground runners that form fibrous mats.

Similar

Clovers (*Trifolium* L.); Crownvetch (*Securigera varia*).

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Dig up small infestations, removing all root fragments; frequent mowing at a height of 2 in for several years; effectively controlled by any of the several readily available general use herbicides such as clopyralid, glyphosate, or triclopyr. Natural enemies include one fungal associate, *Erysiphe betae*, several species of arthropods and six lepidopterans.

Credits

The information provided in this factsheet was gathered from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. Individual species images that appear with a number in a black box are courtesy of the Bugwood.org network (<http://www.invasive.org>). Individual photo author credits may not be included due to the small display size of the images and subsequent difficulty of reading the provided text. All other images appear courtesy of Google (<https://images.google.com>).