

## Yellow sweet clover

### *Melilotus officinalis*

#### Description

This plant is capable of nitrogen fixation.

#### Habit

Herbaceous annual or biennial that can grow up to 1 m (3 ft) tall; deep taproot; extensive lateral roots.

#### Leaves

Compound, alternate, clover leaves with three finely toothed leaflets.

#### Stems

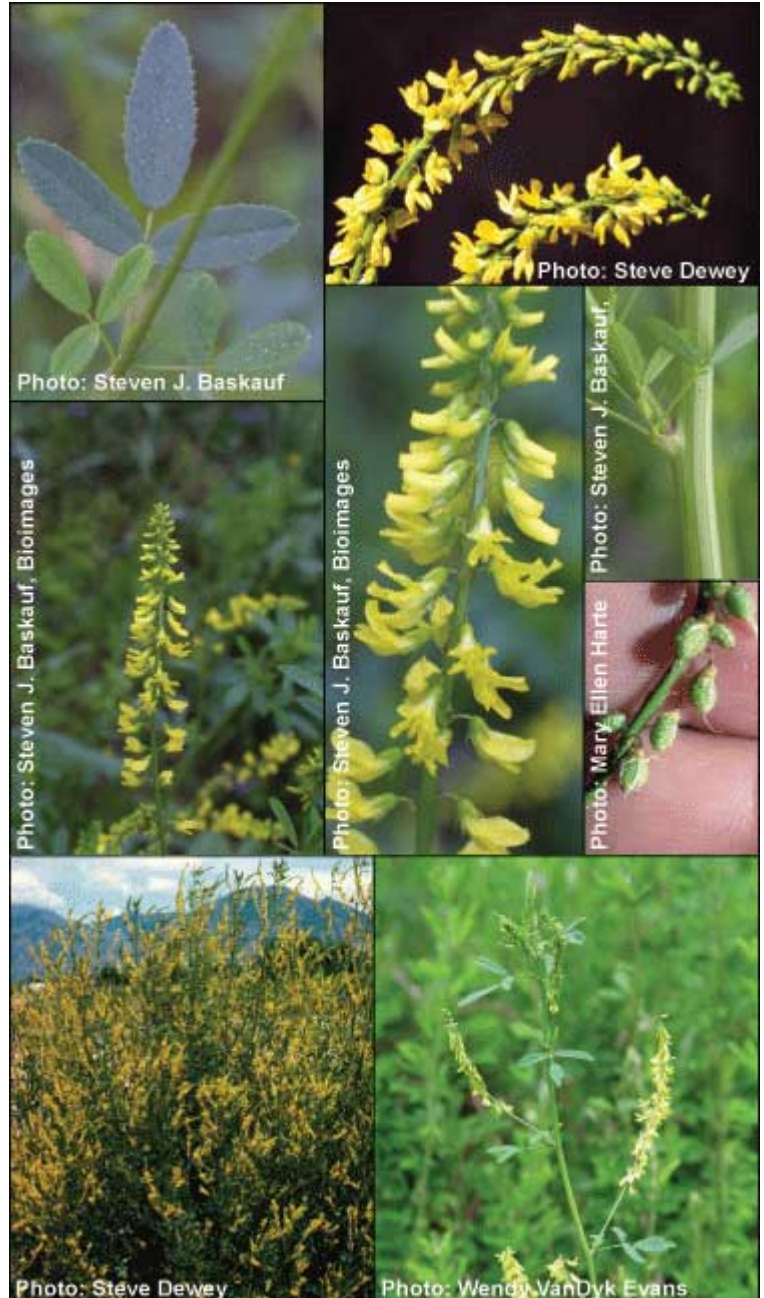
Upright; many-branched; often hollow; leafy stems that may be somewhat spreading near the base giving the plant a bushy appearance.

#### Flowers

Numerous, yellow in color, pea-like, fragrant, crowded onto elongated stems; bloom May through September.

#### Fruits and Seeds

Seed pod, tiny, wrinkled, contains 1-2 small





seeds that may remain viable for up to thirty years, seed germination stimulated by burning.

### **Habitat**

Native to Eurasia. Found in open, disturbed sites such as roadsides and old fields; invades prairies, savannas and dunes; shade intolerant; tolerates nutrient poor soils.

### **Reproduction**

By prolific seed production; up to 350,000 seeds per plant.

### **Similar**

Resembles non-native white sweet clover (*Melilotus alba*), which has white rather than yellow flowers; seedlings may also resemble alfalfa (*Medicago* spp.), which has hairs (pubescent) on the leaf underside.

### **Monitoring and Rapid Response**

Monitor open, sunny sites; sweet yellow clover is most easily identified in June and July, while in bloom. For small infestations, pull first year plants in fall, after the root-crown buds have developed; pull second year plants before flowering. Flowering plants should be removed and disposed of so that seed does not develop. Poorly planned prescribed fire will increase infestations; multiple hot burns needed, timing critical, dependent on population age structure. A single burn may also be combined with herbicide application.

### **Credits**

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