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Melilotus indicus - (L.)All.

Common Name	Annual Yellow Sweetclover
Family	Fabaceae or Leguminosae
Synonyms	
Known Hazards	The dried leaves can be toxic, though the fresh leaves are quite safe[76, 218]. This is due to the presence of coumarin, the substance that gives some dried plants the smell of new mown hay. If taken internally it can prevent the blood from clotting.
Habitats	Fields and waste places in S. England and Wales[17].
Range	Europe - Mediterranean to E. Asia. Naturalized in Britain.
Edibility Rating	
Medicinal Rating	
Care	4



http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Ixi_tixel



<http://www.hear.org/starr/>

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Summary

Physical Characteristics



Melilotus indicus is a ANNUAL growing to 1 m (3ft 3in) by 0.6 m (2ft). It is hardy to zone (UK) 6. It is in flower from Jun to October. The flowers are hermaphrodite (have both male and female organs) and are pollinated by Bees. It can fix Nitrogen.

USDA hardiness zone : 5-9

Suitable for: light (sandy), medium (loamy) and heavy (clay) soils and prefers well-drained soil. Suitable pH: neutral and basic (alkaline) soils. It cannot grow in the shade. It prefers dry or moist soil.

Habitats

Cultivated Beds;

Edible Uses

Edible Parts: [Leaves](#).

Edible Uses:

Leaves - cooked[105].

Medicinal Uses

Plants For A Future can not take any responsibility for any adverse effects from the use of plants. Always seek advice from a professional before using a plant medicinally.

[Antibacterial](#); [Anticoagulant](#); [Astringent](#); [Emollient](#); [Laxative](#); [Narcotic](#); [Poultice](#).

The seed is made into a gruel and used in the treatment of bowel complaints and infantile diarrhoea[218, 240]. The plant is discutient, emollient, astringent, strongly laxative and narcotic[218, 240, 257]. It is used externally as a poultice or plaster on swellings[218, 240]. The plant contains coumarin, which is an anticoagulant[218]. The plant also contains dicumarol, which is a broad spectrum bactericide[218].

Other Uses

[Repellent](#).

The leaves repel insects. They have been placed in beds to repel bedbugs[257].

Flowers

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Cultivation details

Dislikes shade. This species is often cultivated as a fodder crop and cultivars low in coumarin have been developed[218]. This species has a symbiotic relationship with certain soil bacteria, these bacteria form nodules on the roots and fix atmospheric nitrogen. Some of this nitrogen is utilized by the growing plant but some can also be used by other plants growing nearby[200]. When removing plant remains at the end of the growing season, it is best to only remove the aerial parts of the plant, leaving the roots in the ground to decay and release their nitrogen.

Propagation

Seed - sow spring to mid-summer in situ[87]. Pre-soaking the seed for 12 hours in warm water will speed up the germination process, particularly in dry weather[K]. Germination will usually take place within 2 weeks.



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Expert comment

Author

(L.)All.

Botanical References

17

Links / References

[K] **Ken Fern** Notes from observations, tasting etc at Plants For A Future and on field trips.

[17]**Clapham, Tootin and Warburg**. Flora of the British Isles.

A very comprehensive flora, the standard reference book but it has no pictures.

[87]**Woodward. L. Burge. P.** Green Manures.

Green manure crops for temperate areas. Quite a lot of information on a number of species.

[105]**Tanaka. T.** Tanaka's Cyclopaedia of Edible Plants of the World.

The most comprehensive guide to edible plants I've come across. Only the briefest entry for each species, though, and some of the entries are more than a little dubious. Not for the casual reader.

[200]**Huxley. A.** The New RHS Dictionary of Gardening. 1992.

Excellent and very comprehensive, though it contains a number of silly mistakes. Readable yet also very detailed.

[218]**Duke. J. A. and Ayensu. E. S.** Medicinal Plants of China

Details of over 1,200 medicinal plants of China and brief details of their uses. Often includes an analysis, or at least a list of constituents. Heavy going if you are not into the subject.

[240]**Chopra. R. N., Nayar. S. L. and Chopra. I. C.** Glossary of Indian Medicinal Plants (Including the Supplement).

Very terse details of medicinal uses of plants with a wide range of references and details of research into the plants chemistry. Not for the casual reader.

[257]**Moerman. D.** Native American Ethnobotany

Very comprehensive but terse guide to the native uses of plants. Excellent bibliography, fully referenced to each plant, giving a pathway to further information. Not for the casual reader.

Readers comment

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Subject : Melilotus indicus

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