

Alsike Clover for Bee Pasturage

Alsike or Swedish clover (*Trifolium hybridum*), as its name indicates, is a native of Sweden, where it grows wild—being both hardy and productive. It is commonly known by the name of Alsike, that being a parish in Sweden where this clover originated. It was brought into cultivation in Sweden about the beginning of the present century, was introduced into England in 1834, and soon thereafter found its way into the German States and other parts of Europe, and was finally brought into the United States, through the Patent Office, about the year 1853.

Alsike clover is regarded by botanists as a hybrid between our common red and white clovers. The stem and branches are finer and less woody than the common red, and when out and cured for hay, it is perfectly free from fuzz or dust. It does not turn black, but remains the color of well-cured timothy. It has, as the following cut shows, numerous branches and a multitude of blossoms which are rich in honey. The bees have no trouble in finding the honey, as the blossoms are short and the heads no larger than white clover. The blossoms at first are white, but soon change to a beautiful pink, and emit considerable fragrance. The leaves are oval, of a pale green color, and may readily be distinguished at any stage of their growth from the white or red clover by the total absence of a pale white bloom on the upper surface of each leaf, a peculiarity unnoticed by previous writers. It ripens, in the latter part of July, but needs not to be cut till August, if the weather should be unfavorable. The crop of seed is always obtained from this cutting, in which respect it is unlike the common red. It is not advisable to cut this clover more than once each season, but it may be pastured moderately during the fall.

When cut for seed, it may be threshed from the field with a common clover machine; but, if more convenient, it may be stacked and threshed during the fall or winter.

Care should be taken in handling this clover, as the seed shells very easily; but this is looked upon as a point in its favor, as the land thus becomes reseeded every year, and so early, that if the autumn proves to be a wet one, nearly every grain will germinate, and a fine growth of new plants will be secured for the following year. The seed is very fine—being about the size and shape of white clover—a pound containing, it is said, about 600,000 grains, or three times as many as the common red. The seed-pods contain 1, 2, 3 and some times 4 grains, which explains why it is so prolific—a moderate yield being from 150 to 200 lbs. of seed to the acre.

When sowed by itself, 4 lbs. of seed is a great plenty for an acre; but this is not the best plan to pursue, especially with our dry western prairies. It is much the better way to mix Alsike with timothy or the common red, or with both. When thus mixed, they are a help to each other.

The Alsike being a native of a cold climate, does not winterkill, and besides, it acts as a mulch in winter and spring to the common red, and keeps the latter from being destroyed by the heaving-out process. As the red clover shades the roots of the Alsike, which grow close to the surface, it protects the latter from the effects of drouth. The timothy and red clover being both upright growers, lift and keep up the Alsike from the ground, which is very desirable. The stem of the Alsike is too fine to support its many branches in an upright position, and hence is more inclined to lodge than the common red. For the reasons given, the combination of the three named plants is very important, and will prove successful wherever tried.

When mixed sow the usual quantity of timothy and red clover, and not more than 2 lbs. of Alsike seed to the acre—in fact, 1 lb will be ample. If wanted for seed, it might

then be best to use 2 lbs. of Alsike to the acre. Timothy and red clover do no harm, as the crop may be cut so early that the Alsike will be the only plant ripe enough to furnish seed. Timothy seed being about the same size of the Alsike cannot very well be separated from it; but such is not the case with red clover, as a fine sieve will quickly do the work.

Alsike clover, as a fertilizer, must be as good a plant as red clover, if not better, as an examination of figures 2 and 3 will show. Having often dug up specimen roots of both Alsike and the common red clovers for comparison and exhibition, fully as much difference in the size of the crowns and the quantity of roots and rootlets have been found as the cuts indicate. The representations are very accurate, and the reader will do well to examine them closely and note the difference, which seems to be decidedly in favor of the Alsike. Having now grown Alsike on a variety of soils for the past 12 years with good success, I know that what I have set forth in this article are facts and not theories.

But the main object of this article is to call special attention of bee-keepers to Alsike as a honey plant. It is well known to the fraternity that my favorite honey plant is Melilot clover, than which none better has yet been found in the United States. But Melilot will never be cultivated to any extent except by bee-keepers, as no farmer would think of sowing a thing as growing it for hay and pasture. But Alsike clover is a plant that every farmer can and should cultivate, whether he keeps bees or not, as it is superior to the common red, for hay or pasture, for all kinds of stock.

Now, let me indicate to bee-keepers what should be done, and that right speedily. Suppose you have 50 or 100 colonies of bees, more or less, then visit the farmers in close range, and ascertain how many acres they intend to seed down to grass the following spring, and induce enough of them to sow at least as many acres to Alsike, timothy and red clover, as you have colonies. The more land you can thus get seeded down the better. Induce them, if possible, to buy the seed at the cost price, but if you cannot do this, let them have it at half the cost price, but if this fails, then make them a present of as many pounds as they will sow acres. They certainly could not and would not object to this last proposition, as it would be no more work to sow the grass seed mixed with Alsike than if it were left out. A bee-range can be supplied with one of the very best honey plants at a trifling expense. One hundred acres of Alsike, mixed with other grasses, in full bloom during June and July, in the neighborhood of 100 colonies of bees, would insure a large crop of the choicest honey every year, and cause the bee-keeper to swing his hat with joy. Now, if every reader of the BEE JOURNAL will act upon this advice the present winter, hundreds of tons of the finest honey will be added to the crop of 1882, and I am quite sure you will thank me for calling your attention to the project; if so, I shall feel amply repaid.—*American Bee Journal*.

De Omnibus Rebus.

The Newell Grinder.—I have heard from several people who are using this excellent mill. They all speak very highly of its performance. At the Montreal Abattoir, Mr Short says, it is doing splendid work; grinding bones, tan-kage, &c., to perfection. Mr Charest, of the Deaf and Dumb Institution, praises its meal grinding powers, and Mr Melançon, of St. Jacques L'Achigan, after stating that it grinds from 15 to 20 bushels of grain per hour, without heating the meal, says "It is the best grinding mill I ever saw."

Great Sale at Kansas City.—I see by the Breeder's Gazette, that our enterprising countryman Mr Cochran sends a large lot of Angus, Galloways, and Herefords, to the