

DILLENIUS' TICK-TREFOIL

Desmodium glabellum Michx

Plant symbol = DEGL4

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program



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Alternate Names

Panicle tick-trefoil, perplexed tick-trefoil, tall tick clover, Diclinous' tick-trefoil (Connecticut), smooth tick-trefoil

Uses

The seeds of the Dillenius' Tick-Trefoil are eaten by upland game birds, small rodents, wild turkey, rabbits, groundhogs and livestock. It is also an excellent deer browse.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, stae noxious status, and wetland indicator value.)

Description

Dillenius' tick trefoil is a member of the pea family. This native perennial forb grows between 2 ½ to 5 feet in height. Its tiny flowers are pink or purple and irregular in

shape and have no floral scent. The flowers turn light blue when spent. Bloom time is from mid-summer to early fall and lasts about a month. The leaves are alternate, composed of three entire leaflets. They are egg shaped with little or no point. There is little or no stipule where the leaf is attached to the stem. The seed pods are covered with tiny hooked hairs that enable them to stick to the fur of passing animals and the fabric of humans, thus providing a mechanism for dispersal. Long tongued bees are the primary pollinators.

Adaptation and Distribution

This tick trefoil prefers partial sun and dry to slightly dry conditions. It usually grows in soil that contains loam, clay-loam, or some kind of rocky material. Its habitats include savannas, rocky upland forest, edges of wooded areas, thickets, and limestone glades. Its range is from New England to Minnesota and from Florida to Texas. It is common throughout the Midwest States.

For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Establishment

A clean, firm seedbed is essential for establishing Dillenius' Tick-Trefoil. A good seedbed can be prepared by disking and harrowing, following by cultipacking. Planting into no-till conditions can be effective provided weeds are controlled and residue is managed prior to planting. Good seed-to-soil contact is important for germination and establishment.

The seedbed should be firm enough to allow the seed to be planted ⅛" to ¼" deep. Cultipacker seeders and band seeders followed by press wheels or a cultipacker help ensure shallow seed placement and good seed-to-soil contact. Apply fertilizer (especially phosphorus or potassium) only as recommended by a soil test. Nitrogen fertilizer is not recommended during establishment year.

Inoculating seeds with *Rhizobium* before planting is recommended. Consult inoculant supplier for recommendations on specific *Rhizobium* strains for Dillenius' tick-trefoil.

Seeding rates for Dillenius' Tick-Trefoil should be 2 to 4 oz. pure live seed per acre for wildlife planting or 0.5 to 10% of a mix for prairie restoration. Seed can be planted in the spring or early fall.

Management

Reduce weed competition by mowing at a height that will not affect the tick-trefoil seedlings. For grassy weed control use a grass herbicide and follow label

recommendation, as weed control will encourage a good stand. Note: Some herbicide products may not be registered on this legume species in your state.

Pests and Potential Problems

Japanese beetle adults feed on flowers and leaves. White mold has been observed on some *Desmodium* species.

Environmental Concerns

Dillenius' tick trefoil is on the special concern list in Connecticut.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Alcona Germplasm Dillenius' tick-trefoil is a tested class release from the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center in East Lansing, Michigan. It was collected from native stands in Alcona County, MI and released in 2006.

Marion Germplasm Dillenius' tick-trefoil is a selected class release from the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center in East Lansing, MI. It was collected from native stands in Marion County, IL and released in 2009.

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Control

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each Control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA, NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control methods named, and other products may be equally effective.

References

USDA. 1961. Seeds. The Yearbook of Agriculture. U.S. Printing Office. Washington, DC. 591 pp.

USDA-NRCS. 1999. Establishing Cool Season Grass and Legumes for Conservation Cover. Conservation Management Sheet. NRCS-MI Field Operations Technical Guide.

USDA-NRCS. 2008. Conservation Practice Standard 327 – Conservation Cover. NRCS-MI Field Operations Technical Guide.

USDA-NRCS. 2009. Five Keys to Successful Grass Seeding in Michigan. Technical Brochure. NRCS-MI Field Operations Technical Guide.

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>