**Trifolium incarnatum** L.  
*(Trifolium molinerii, Trifolium stellatum var. elatius, Trifolium stellatum subvar. stramineum, Trifolium stramineum)*

- Its wide distribution has resulted in many common names including Carnation Clover, French Clover, German Clover, Incarnate Clover, Scarlet Clover, and Trébol Encarnado; this member of the family **Fabaceae** is native to Africa, Asia, and Europe and has naturalized extensively in the Western Hemisphere, including Texas and the Southeastern USA.

- When grown as a 12" to 24" (36") tall cool season annual or biennial, *T. incarnatum* consists of a rosette of mostly erect unbranched pubescent stems originating from near the soil line; plants have the classic trifoliate leaves that lend the genus its name, which translates as three-leaved; the rich green foliage can acquire an almost frosted look with its whitish pubescence and this makes a great foil for the beautiful paintbrush shaped spiky tufts of terminal dark pink, red to scarlet flowers; the cylindrical or cone-shaped inflorescences are 1" to 2½" long with individual ½" long florets opening from base to tip; flowers are effective over several weeks each spring, producing round yellowish seeds, after which the plants die; the specific epithet means pink fleshed in reference to the flowers; *Trifolium incarnatum* L. subsp. *molineri* J.T.I.B. Syme (Trifolium molinerii, Trifolium incarnatum var. molinerii) features white flowers that often fade to a light pink as they mature.

- In addition to use as an ornamental, Crimson Clover is important for soil stabilization, soil improvement, fodder and forage, and as a bee plant; the seeds are sometimes sprouted and used as a vegetable; use as fodder or hay should occur prior to seed development as barbed hairs on the seed heads can cause digestive problems in horses and some other livestock; like most clovers, *T. incarnatum* can grow in very poor fertility soils and tends to improve the fertility of those sites over time through nitrogen fixation, particularly if seeds are inoculated with *Rhizobium leguminosarum* biovar *trifolii* prior to sowing; ornamental uses are usually as a temporary seasonal groundcover, seasonal bank cover, or as a naturalized component of wildflower mixes; its tendency to reseed and vigorous cool season nature make *T. incarnatum* a bit too aggressive for mixed species cool season plantings in more formal settings.

- While tolerant of a wide range of soil conditions, including those that are moderately acidic, plants are not tolerant of poor drainage, shade, or highly alkaline or saline soils; Crimson Clover is grown as a winter or cool season annual or biennial in USDA hardiness zones 6 to 9, whereas in colder climates it is grown as a summer annual; a crown and stem rot caused by *Sclerotinia trifoliorum* is the most common malady, especially during cool wet conditions.

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