Birdsfoot Trefoil (Lotus corniculatus L.)

Birdsfoot trefoil is a long-lived, deep-rooted legume suitable for hay or pasture in areas with drainage problems or low soil pH. It is moderately winter-hardy and tolerant of dry summer conditions if soil depth provides available moisture. It can also be irrigated in shallow soils, or drier areas. Birdsfoot trefoil is a nonbloating legume quite suitable for sheep or cattle but not typically used for horse pasture, because of the presence of tannins. It is not tolerant of early spring grazing or continuous grazing and establishes slowly and with some difficulty, but is vigorous once established. Lotus species each require unique Rhizobium for nodulation. It tolerates only short periods of flooding.

**Life cycle (annual/biennial/perennial):** Long-lived perennial.

**Growth habit & Regrowth type:** Upright to decumbent growth habit. Regrowth from crown buds. Requires rest period to restore root carbohydrates.

**Invasive potential:** Low. Difficult to establish.

**Persistence:** Long lived (10+ years) once established if rest period is provided to ensure restoration of root carbohydrates.

**Physiology and growth period:** Lotus species have cool-season (C3) physiology but, with adequate soil moisture, they will grow the entire season from late Spring (50 F; 10 C) until hard freeze (26 F; -3 C). Typically, this is from April to early October.

### Soil conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pH</th>
<th>Drainage</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Texture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>Highest</td>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>Highest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>MWD</td>
<td>SPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Clay - Sand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperature tolerate (°C)</th>
<th>Particularity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>Highest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grow on droughty, infertile, acid, or mildly alkaline soils, on mine spoils, and under saline and waterlogged conditions. Birdsfoot trefoil is more tolerant than alfalfa to adverse soil conditions, but less cold or heat tolerant.

For Soil Drainage categories, “Abbreviations are used for Soil Drainage categories: VPD (very poorly drained), PD (poorly drained), SPD (somewhat poorly drained), MWD (moderately well drained), WD (well drained), SED (somewhat excessively drained), ED (excessively drained).”