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# Buffalo Clover

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Two clovers native to Kentucky, buffalo clover (Trifolium reflexum) and running buffalo clover( T. stoloniferum) recently have been re-discovered. These clovers were common in Kentucky until about 1850. Their names are derived from the fact that they occurred mostly along buffalo trails through woods. Historical records indicate that buffalo clover occurred on drier and less fertile soils of the former Big Barren Region and the Shawnee Hills, whereas running buffalo clover was widespread on moist, fertile soils in the Bluegrass Region. Both arc now extremely rare in Kentucky. At present buffalo clover has been found in Mammoth Cave National Park, and running buffalo clover in Boone, Bourbon and Fayette Counties. Running buffalo clover has been designated as a federally endangered species.

## Description

### Buffalo Clover:

This annual sometimes biennial species with purple-red flowers is upright in growth and leafmarked like red clover (see diagram ). Heads reflex in seed and are borne on branching stems that bear long-pointed leaves. Blooms of buffalo clover are reddish-purple rather than pink like red clover.

### Running Buffalo Clover:

This perennial low-growing, species has white flowers that creep along the ground like white clover. It differs from white clover in that heads are borne on stems with leaves and branches. White clover is prostrate with naked stems arising directly from creeping stems whereas running buffalo clover has heads arising from a pair of aerial leaves. The leaflets also are more rounded and are usually larger than white clover in luxuriant growth. Leaflets are not v marked.

## Habitat

Buffalo clover:
Plants may occur along roads or paths bordered by woods, sometimes in disturbed areas. They arc not likely to be found in pastures competing with introduced grasses like tall fescue or orchardgrass. It may survive best in drier, limestone-based soils, but not in river bottoms. Associated trees include oak, hickory and dogwood.

Running buffalo clover
Running buffalo clover has been found in upland terraces of the Ohio River. It does not appear to tolerate heavy shading or heat. It may also be located in borders or paths of woods, and steep, weedy ravines and may not survive intensive mowing or other cultivation. Associated trees include walnut, cherry, ash and tulip poplar. No records occur of the two clovers growing together. Running buffalo clover is most likely to be confused with white clover and alsike clover but may be distinguished by characteristics shown on the diagram.

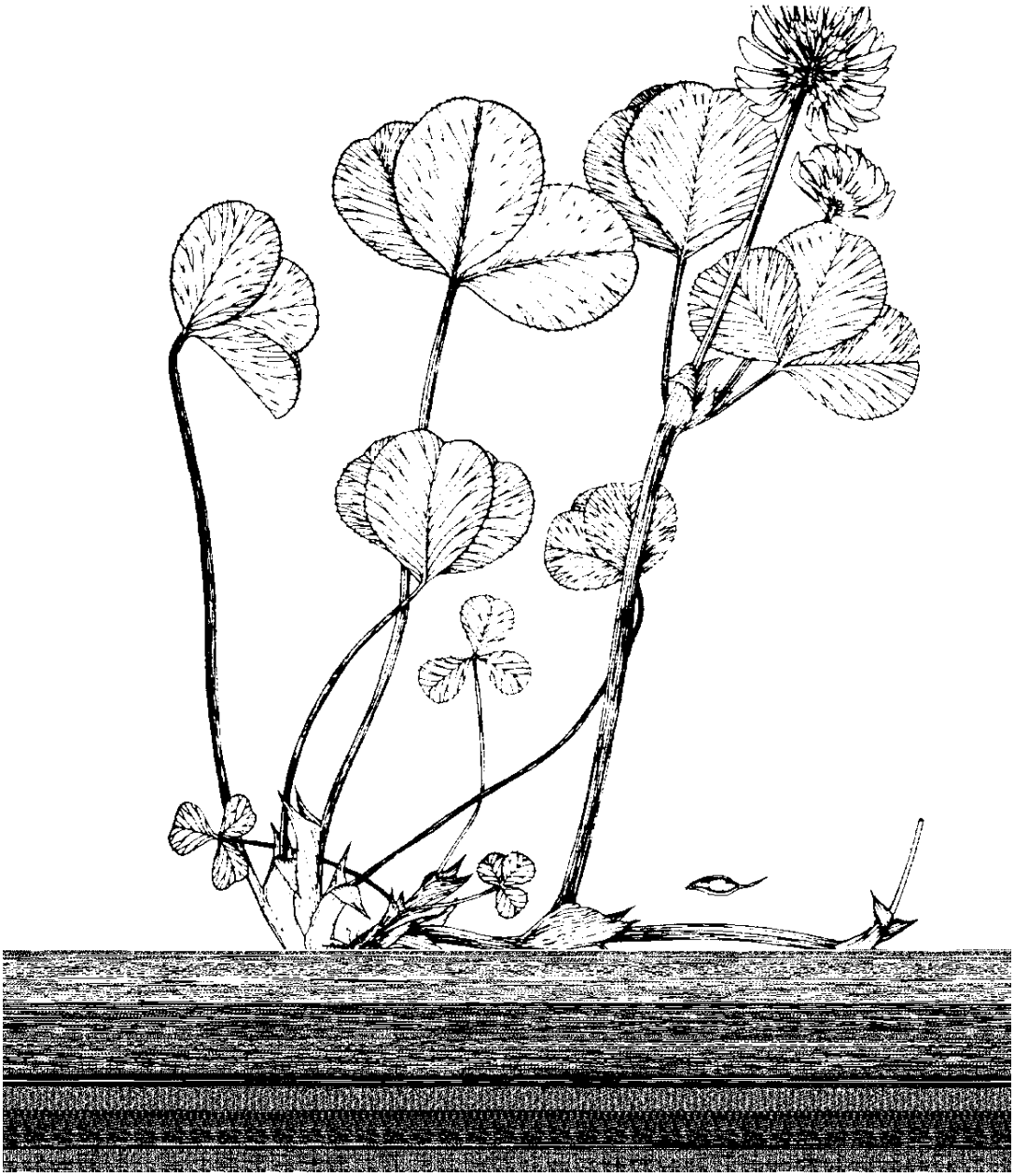
## Uses

Neither of these clovers is likely to become a major forage crop mainly because the habitat and vegetation of early Kentucky no longer widely exists. However, these species may contribute valuable genes, via interspecific hybridization, to our major forage species, like white, red and alsike clover.

## Current Extent in Kentucky

As previously noted, both these native clovers arc near extinction in Kentucky. Knowledge and information about any occurrences of these species is very valuable to scientists trying to preserve Kentucky's native plants.
If you find suspect plants, do not disturb them in their native habitat since they are nearly extinct. Instead, photograph them to point out the habitat and descriptive details. Get permission to examine plants on private property. Notify one of the authors of details of the location if .you find plants. Your cooperation in saving these species from extinction is appreciated.

Buffalo Clover



Running Buffalo Clover