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Red Clover—More than a Weed

Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) is considered a weed by many, but I always find a place for it in my perennial gardens where the mauve-purple ball-like blossoms are often mistaken for chives by friends not expecting clover amongst perennials. It is a plant from my childhood. Romping through the fields, upon spying it, I would stop, pick a blossom and pull a clump of flower petals from the head, then sip the sweet nectar taste from the ends.

From a conservation point, it is an important member of the pea family and like all legumes is a nitrogen-fixing plant. Essentially, the plant is able to take in nitrogen from the atmosphere and convert it biologically to an organic nitrogen in the soil that can be taken in by other plants. Some gardeners and farmers use it as a cover crop, green manure turning it back into the soil to enrich it prior to planting other crops.

Red Clover was brought to this country by early colonists who used it as an herbal tea with medicinal benefits. Today it is used in holistic remedies and treatments. Clovers were called 'cleavers' in the Middle Ages, and many English town names where the plant grew well were derived from it.

Finally, it is a wonderful food for butterflies and bees.
So many reasons to plant some in your gardens.

