

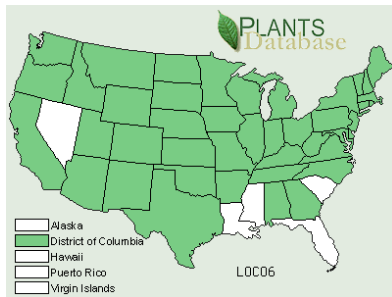


# Bird's-Foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* L.

**Common Names:** birdfoot deervetch, bird's-foot trefoil, bloomfell, cat's clover, crowtoes, ground honeysuckle

**Native Origin:** Europe

**Description:** A perennial, fine-stemmed, leafy legume (pea family, *Fabaceae*) that grows 6-24 inches in height. Erect stems are nearly square, emerge from a single root crown and have many branches that can become tangled and matted. Clover-like leaves are pinnately compound, alternate, and consist of three oval leaflets and two smaller leaflet-like stipules that grow at the base of the leaf stalk. Flowers are bright yellow, sometimes streaked with red, 1/2 inch long, born in flat-topped clusters of three to six at the end of stems, and bloom from June to frost. Clusters of slender brown to black seed pods are cylindrical, resemble a bird's foot, and contain 10-20 seeds that eject when mature. The deep, branched root system has a 3-foot long taproot and secondary roots from rhizomes. It reproduces by seed, rhizomes and above ground runners that form fibrous mats.



**Habitat:** It is located in roadsides, waste areas, fields, prairies, wildlife openings, and open disturbed areas. It tolerates a variety of soil types including dry, moist, hardpan or droughty soils. It is a common lawn weed in western NY.

**Distribution:** This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in CA, IL, MN, MO, OR, TN, VA, WA, and WI.

**Ecological Impacts:** Bird's-foot trefoil creates tangled mats of dense growth that can choke out other plants. It spreads to threaten the diversity of native plants.

### Control and Management:



- **Manual-** Dig up small infestations, remove all root fragments; frequent mowing at a height of 2" for several years helps control the plant, but can set back native plants. *Note:* Control burns are not recommended because they increase seed germination and promote seedling establishment
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as clopyralid [Transline], glyphosate, or triclopyr. Follow label and state requirements.
- **Natural enemies-** One fungal associate, *Erysiphe betae* and seven species of arthropods are reported to occur on *Lotus* including one bug and six lepidopterans.

**References:** www.forestimages.org, http://plants.usda.gov, www.nps.gov/plants/alien, Czarapata, Elizabeth J. Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest, An Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control, 2005 p. 64-65, www.invasive.org/weeds/asian/lotus.pdf  
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