

# Black Medick

*Medicago lupulina* L.

## Alternate Names

trefoil, black clover, none-such, hop medic, spotted burclover, blackseed

## Related Species

Alfalfa

*M. sativa* L.,

Yellow alfalfa

*Medicago sativa* L. ssp.

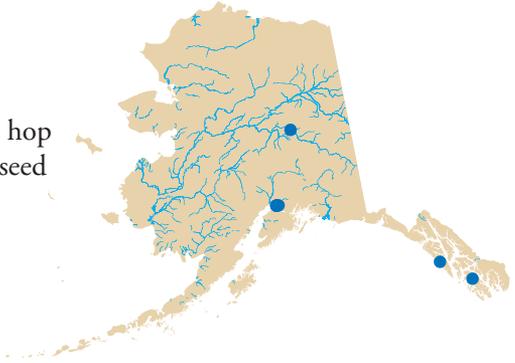
*falcata* (L.) Arcang.,

Birdfoot trefoil

*Lotus corniculatus* L.

## Description

Black medick is an annual, biennial, or short-lived perennial plant with hairy prostrate stems growing up to 32 inches long. Leaves are alternate, compound, and composed of 3 ovate, hairy leaflets that are  $\frac{1}{4}$ – $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches long. The terminal leaflet is stalked, while the lateral ones are nearly stalkless. Flowers are borne in globe-shaped clusters of 20–50 and are yellow,  $\frac{1}{8}$ – $\frac{3}{16}$  of an inch long, and



*Flower and fruit of black medick.*

Photo by James C. Snyder



Photo by James C. Snyder

*Black medick.*

composed of 5 united sepals, 5 united petals, 10 stamens, and a single pistil. The fruit is a black, kidney-shaped pod,  $\frac{1}{16}$ – $\frac{1}{8}$  of an inch long, that contains a single seed.

**Similar Species**

Alfalfa (*M. sativa* L.) is another non-native cultivated plant that can be distinguished from black medick by its blue or purple flowers and spirally-coiled pod containing several seeds.



USDA Forest Service photo by Michael Shephard

*Alfalfa.*

It is also found along roadsides. Yellow alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L. ssp. *falcata* (L.) Arcang.) is very similar to alfalfa but with yellow flowers. It is also showing up in Southcentral Alaska. Birdfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus* L.) is a similar yellow-flowered species, but it has straight seed pods compared to the curved pods of yellow alfalfa.

**Management**

Hand-pulling provides effective control of black medick. Herbicides are effective when applied immediately after the emergence of leaves.

**Notes**

Black medick is native to Eurasia and Africa. Its scientific name comes from *Media*, the country that alfalfa came from, and *lupulina*, Latin for “little hop plant.” Both the genus and species were named by Carolus Linnaeus in 1753.



USDA Forest Service photo by Michael Shephard

*Birdfoot trefoil.*