

NATIVE PERENNIALS



Prairie Clover, Silky

Dalea villosa

Native. Produces light pink to rose-purple flowers atop laterally branching stems which turn upward at the tips. Leaves are gray-green and covered with soft, fine hairs. Legume. Grows in sandy, gravelly soils so needs good drainage. Grows 1-2 ft. tall.

Description: This perennial forb, 8 to 14 inches tall, develops from a red-orange root and branching crown. One to several stems often spread laterally before arching upward at the tips. Stems and leaves are gray-green with long, soft hairy hairs; leaves are odd-pinnate with 11 to 21 leaflets. Flowering spikes are up to 4 inches long; petals are rose-purple to light pink, but rarely white or bluish-white.

Distribution/Habitat: Silky prairie clover is native northward to southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan and from western Wisconsin through much of the Great Plains to the Texas panhandle and adjacent New Mexico. It is infrequent in central and eastern North Dakota, central and western South Dakota, and southeast Wyoming, but it is common throughout Nebraska. Silky prairie clover is at home in sandy soils of prairies, sand dunes, stream valleys, and sandy open woodlands.

Comments: Silky prairie clover is an effective soil stabilizer, commonly found on sand dunes. Its infrequency is suspected to be the result of good palatability. It is grazed to some extent by livestock, and deer and pronghorn are known to use it. Birds and rodents eat the seed. Lakota used the roots as a laxative, leaves and blossoms were eaten to reduce swelling of the throat.

Credit: James E. Johnson & Gary E. Larson, Grassland Plants of South Dakota and the Northern Great Plains. SDSU, Brookings, SD. B-566 (rev.) August 1999. Page 180.

Photo Credit: SDSU Ag Experiment Station

