

Bell County Master Gardener

Tip of the Week

By Candy Mullen

**“Plantin’ of the Green”**

As we all know, St. Patrick’s Day is right around the corner. As it happens, it is also time to start planting in your prepared beds. Consider planting some shamrocks to bring a little “Irish” shades of green to our corner of Central Texas while planning the way your beds will look. When you go to buy your plants, look for *Oxalis acetosella* (best known as Shamrocks or Four Leaf Clover). *Oxalis* are members of the wood sorrel family, commonly found during March, and are very popular as houseplants. Originally natives of Mexico and South America, you will now find them planted many places as ground cover and also as weeds!

*Oxalis* prefer bright sunshine and moist but not wet soil. They are tiny tubers or bulbs and most have the four lobed leaves, usually heart or triangular shaped. All varieties flower profusely with white, pink, or yellow blooms. They are generally problem free and not bothered by most insect pests. Both the flowers and leaves close at night and open during bright sunshine!

Here are a few varieties to choose from when you shop. *Oxalis Regnelli* (Lucky Plant) produces white or pink flowers and has a variegated species called “Irish Mist.” *Oxalis Triangularis* (Purple Shamrock/Charmed Wine) has deep purple leaves, light purplish pink flowers; *Oxalis Brazil* (Silver and Gold) has variegated, single leaves and profuse yellow flowers.

As beautiful as the *Oxalis* are, actually they are not the official Irish Shamrock (*Trifolium dubium*), if you are looking for accuracy. These are actually clovers and members of the pea family. There are four varieties: *Trifolium dubium* (lesser trefoil, or hop clover); *Trefolium repens* (white clover); *Medicago lupulina* (black medick); and *Trifolium pratense* (red clover). These four plants are the true Irish plants traditionally worn on St. Patrick’s Day and they have three leaves on a common stalk to symbolize the Trinity as explained by Saint Patrick! Any questions? Contact [ask.bcmga@gmail.com](mailto:ask.bcmga@gmail.com)