Plant Identification

Types of Plants:
**Forages** - Leaves, stems, stalks & heads of harvested (hay) or unharvested (pasture) plants
**Legumes**
**Grasses**

**Weeds** – Any plant that we don’t want to grow (fields, pastures, along fence lines, etc.)

**Edible**

**Troublesome** (i.e. invasive, burrs, thistles, etc.)

**Toxic** (poisonous)

Grass or Legume?
1. Identify general type of forage (grass or legume)
2. Then use details to identify species

**Legumes:**
- Coarser stems
- Trifoliate leaves (3)
- Loosely attached leaves
- Netted veins in leaves
- Flowers (seeds in pods)
- Long single taproot

**Grasses:**
- Finer stems
- Longer leaves
- Stronger attached leaves
- Parallel veins in leaves
- Seed heads at top of stalk
- Fibrous roots

Learn to identify forages without seed heads or flowers
Learn to identify by photos AND live plants

Identification of Toxic Plants:
- Leaves
- Stems
- Color (leaves & flowers)
- Flowers or seed heads
- Preferred environment (i.e. wet or dry soil, sun or shade, etc.)
- Other details (i.e. burrs, thistles, noxious odor, fruit, nuts, etc.)

Identification Hints for Forages:
**Common Legumes (without flowers) *All are trifoliate (3 leaflets)***
Alfalfa – upright, longer & narrower leaves
Red clover – upright, hairs on stems, watermark
White clover – stolons, watermark
Alsike clover – upright, NO watermark

**Common Grasses (without seed heads) *All except Kentucky bluegrass are bunch grasses***
Kentucky bluegrass – sod-forming, narrow leaves, boat-shaped leaf tip
Tall fescue – sharp edges on leaves
Ryegrass – shiny back of leaves
Orchardgrass – v-shaped leaves (base), flattened stem
Timothy – flat, nearly-smooth leaves, bulb @ base of stem