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dictionary

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Language



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al·fal·fa  (ăl-făl fə)

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n.

A southwest Asian perennial herb (*Medicago sativa*) in the pea family, having compound leaves with three leaflets and clusters of usually blue-violet flowers. It is widely cultivated as a pasture and hay crop.

[Spanish, from Arabic *al-faṣṣa* : *al-*, the + *faṣṣa*, alfalfa (variant of *fiṣṣa*, ultimately (probably via Coptic *p-espesta* : *p-*, masculine sing. definite article + *espesta*, alfalfa) from Aramaic *espestā*, from Middle Persian *aspast*, from Old Iranian *aspasti-* : **aspa-*, horse; see **ekwo-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#) + **-sti-*, food, fodder; see **ed-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#)).]



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alfalfa

Medicago sativa

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Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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