TECHNICAL NOTE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
GEORGIA STATE OFFICE

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
ATHENS, GEORGIA

TECHNICAL NOTE
Plant Materials No. 22
January 2008

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BUSH LESPEDEZA - INVASIVE WILDLIFE PLANT

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INTRODUCTION:

USDA policy states that the Federal Government will not authorize, fund, or carry out actions that it believes are likely to cause or promote the introduction or spread of invasive species in the United States or elsewhere. Bush Lespedeza or Shrubby Lespedeza (*Lespedeza thunbergii*) is recognized by the USDA-NRCS Plant Material Program as a plant that may become weedy or invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed (http:// plants.usda.gov/factsheet/doc/fs_leth4.doc). Shrubby lespedeza is listed as a nonnative invasive plant for forests in the Southeastern United States and has even become widespread enough to require control measures (Miller, 2003). The Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council (EPPC) lists bush lespedeza as a category 3 problem in Georgia (www.gaeppc.org). The EPPC of Kentucky also lists bush lespedeza as an invasive plant (www.invasive.org).

Due to the invasiveness of bush lespedeza, the USDA- NRCS Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) Americus, Georgia will officially discontinue the cultivar 'Amquail', which was released in 1987 for wildlife food and cover. The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center will no longer produce or promote the use of 'Amquail' for wildlife plantings or any other conservation uses. The Plant Materials Center encourages NRCS personnel to advise landowners to use alternative native plant species for wildlife plantings. Biologists from NRCS and Georgia Department of Natural Resources also suggest using other native alternatives for wildlife habitat. Alternatives can include roundhead lespedeza, native plums, sumac, wax myrtle and hairy lespedeza. A list of native plant nurseries can be found at www.plantnative.org and www.afnn.org. Native seed producers can be found at www.ernstseed.com and www.roundstoneseed.com.

HISTORY/BACKGROUND:

Bush lespedeza was introduced to the United States from Asia and utilized for quail food in the Southeast primarily on the coastal plain (Clewell, 1966). It and bicolor lespedeza , a closely related shrub, were planted in forest openings for wildlife food plots and soil stabilization. Shrub lespedeza can reproduce and spread even under a medium-to-dense overstory. Spread is encouraged by burning (Miller, 2003).

IDENTIFICATION FEATURES:

'Amquail' is a perennial warm-season legume that reproduces primarily by seed. It ranges in height from 6 to 8 feet. It has multiple stems that rise from a crown-like stump near ground level. The main stems may be as much as 1 to 2 inches in diameter. Leaves are trifoliate. Each of the three leaflets are elliptic in shape. Mature leaflets vary in width from .5 to 1 inch and in length from 1 to 1.75 inches. Flowers are rose-purple and approximately .5 to .75 inches long. A very low percentage of the population produces white flowers.

The peak bloom period occurs from mid-August to Early September. Characteristic black seeds mature in October and early November (Surrency,1990). The closely related bicolor lespedeza has similar characteristics with mottled seed.

LITERATURE CITED

Clewell, A.F. 1966. Identification of the Lespedezas in North America. Bulletin of Tall Timbers Research Station Number 7. May 1966.

Miller, J.H. 2003. Nonnative invasive plants of southern forests. USDA FS SRS-62

Surrency,E.D. 1990. Amquail. USDA Soil Conservation Service Bulletin. September 1990.

Bloom of 'Amquail' bush Lespedeza

Seed pods of ‘Amquail’

Stem and leaves of ‘Amquail’