

Kura Clover

Introduction

Kura clover is a recently introduced high quality perennial legume currently under investigation by University of Kentucky researchers. Its spreading, prostrate growth habit resembles that of white clover; however, kura clover spreads by rhizomes rather than stolons. Once established, kura clover has the ability to fill in bare spaces, thus causing the stand to thicken.

Marketing and Market Outlook

Kura clover shows promise as a high quality pasture forage for either continuous or rotational grazing. It is also an excellent crop for honey production, erosion control and soil improvement.

Production Considerations

Site selection and planting

Kura clover performs best on well-drained, fertile soil, but it will tolerate a wide range of soil conditions. Its low seedling vigor makes establishment challenging; however, proper seed bed preparation and seeding techniques can result in good stands. The use of an herbicide may be necessary to prevent weed competition. It is critical that seeds be inoculated with the *Rhizobium* inoculum specific for this crop.

Spring is the best time to seed kura clover, but later sowings can thrive when irrigated. Research has shown that vegetative establishment of kura clover can be highly successful provided adequate rainfall or irrigation follows sprigging and sprigs are placed in good contact with the



soil. Once established, stands thicken and persist indefinitely. Kura clover should not be sown with a companion crop such as a small grain and it usually cannot be renovated into established grass stands.

Management practices are similar to those of white clover, except that kura clover only produces one flush of blooms per year. Bloat can be a serious concern when cattle graze on pure stands, but a forage grass sown into established kura clover stands can help reduce this problem. This legume will go dormant during periods of drought, resuming growth when moisture is once again available.

Pest management

Weeds pose the most serious threat to this crop, especially during establishment when weed competition can result in stand failure. Kura clover is apparently resistant to most insects and diseases, except for powdery mildew.

Harvest and storage

Kura clover stands slowly thicken with age and not much production may be expected in



the year of sowing. Only light grazing, if any, should be permitted during the first year. Kura clover blooms only once per season, beginning with the second year after sowing. The first crop may be harvested for hay or silage, but it will be lower yielding than alfalfa. The aftermath growth may be harvested by grazing. Kura clover should not be intensively grazed after September 15 in order to allow for the replenishment of root reserves and the maintenance of stands. If not overgrazed, stands should last many years.

Labor requirements

Production/management requires approximately 6 hours per acre.

Economic Considerations

Due to the experimental nature of this crop and its newness to Kentucky, cost and return budget figures are not yet available. However, the cost of kura clover seed is twice that of alfalfa and several times more costly than red clover seed.

The economic benefit of kura clover's longevity must be weighed against its higher establishment costs and lower yield when compared to other forage legumes.

More Information

- Kura Clover for Kentucky AGR-141 (University of Kentucky, 1997)
<http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/agr/agr141/agr141.htm>
- Establishing Kura Clover Stands (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000)
http://www.uwex.edu/ces/forage/pubs/Kura_stands.htm
- Kura Clover (Purdue University, 1998)
<http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/cropfactsheets/KuraClover.html>
- Understanding Forage Quality (American Farm Bureau Federation, 2001)
<http://www.agfoundation.org/projects/docs/UnderstandingForageQuality.pdf>