

Illinois Covey Germplasm False Indigo Bush

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced the release of a selected ecotype of false indigo bush (*Amorpha fruticosa*, L.) for the state of Illinois. Illinois Covey Germplasm False Indigo Bush release was made in 2005.

Amorpha fruticosa L., false indigo bush, is a native woody leguminous shrub. It is found in more open areas along lakes and streams and may also be found in upland areas where additional moisture is received. *Amorpha* is an important species providing wildlife cover and is also suitable for environmental plantings because of its handsome foliage and flowers.

Illinois Covey Germplasm False Indigo Bush was collected from counties in the state of Illinois and is being made available through the USDA Plant Materials Program. In addition to being used for wildlife cover, it can also be used to enhance wetland riparian areas. A primary use will be in a covey headquarter mix on upland sites. A covey headquarter planting is a small vegetative wildlife cover site, approximately 1500 square feet. False indigo bush will address erosion control along fluctuating shorelines, streams, and wetlands.

Description

False indigo bush, *Amorpha fruticosa* L., is a native legume that has growth form like a medium sized shrub up to a maximum 18 feet. The general shape is an open canopy with the bulk of foliage and twigs in the upper 1/3 of the crown. The leaves are alternate, pinnately compound, 4 to 8 inches long, with 15 to 25 leaflets. Each leaflet is up to two inches long and just over one inch wide with a small, bristle-like point with rounded tip. The bright green foliage is attractive and the finely divided compound leaves add a soft texture to the plant. The flowers are in dense spikes on the upper part of the plant, often several spikes clustered

together. Each flower has dark indigo-purple petals with yellow-tipped stamens. The flowers are scented and occur in 3 to 6 inch long upright spikes. Flowering time: late spring to mid-summer. False indigo is long-lived on adapted sites and regenerates from seed or branch layering. Twigs are rigid, glabrous, red-brown or gray, often with an insect caused, long swelling near the tip. The fruit is a small, warty kidney shaped pod (1/2 inch long), with large glandular dots, in a crowded cylindrical cluster. The fruit persist on the shrub through winter.



Adaptation

False indigo bush occurs in moist prairie thickets and along streams and rivers in prairies throughout the tallgrass region. This native legume is found as far North as New Jersey and Minnesota, down to the Mexican border and does well throughout the U. S. False indigo bush likes full sun or light shade and thrives in moist soils that are poorly drained. It also performs well on silt loams to dry sands.

Ecological Considerations

Illinois Covey Germplasm is a selected release of naturally occurring false indigo. It does not differ significantly in rate of spread or seed production from naturally occurring false indigo. Illinois Covey

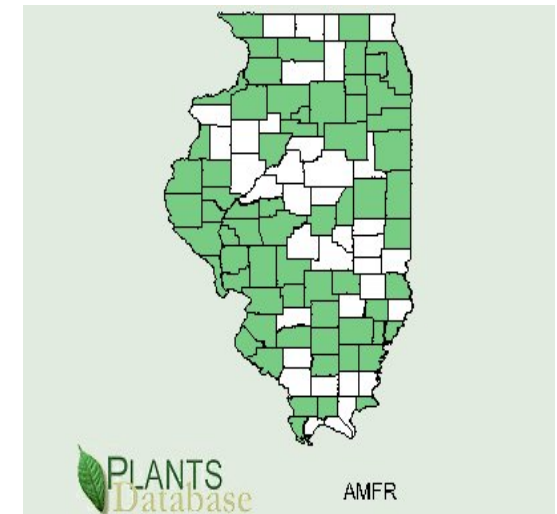
Germplasm was documented as “OK to Release” when rated through the worksheet for “Environmental Evaluation of Plant Materials Releases.”

Evaluation and Performance

The Illinois source has been producing an average of 43.8 bulk pounds of seed/acre production at the PMC since 2004. In 2005 seven field plantings with direct seeding and bareroots have been established in Illinois. Evaluations are limited for the first growing season on these plantings; however, vigor of the direct seedlings have been fair with average 4 inches in height by the end of the first growing season. Density 1 plant every 3 sq.ft. where the grass competition was controlled. The bare root seedlings have good survivability of 75% and average 18 inches height after the first growing season. There was good survivability with drought conditions in 2005.

There was good deer resistance with no damage to seedlings during the growing season.

Illinois Covey Germplasm False Indigo Bush is Native to Illinois



Documented Occurrences in Green

Area of Intended Use of Illinois Covey Germplasm False Indigo Bush

Illinois Covey Germplasm False Indigo Bush originated from four collections harvested in counties throughout the state of Illinois. Area of intended use is primarily Illinois. These counties serve both the geographic area represented by the genetic material of the parent seed and the potential market of the end product, which is commercially available as a selected release.

Establishment

Establishing covey headquarters for wildlife plantings can be attained by using false indigo bush seed, bareroot or container plants. False indigo can be added to a "covey headquarter" seeding mix. A covey headquarter seeding is best drilled but can be broadcast and harrowed in an area (1500 sq. ft., 50' x 30') where the soil has been disturbed or exposed by mechanical preparation for a seedbed. A recommended seeding rate for false indigo is 15#PLS/acre; this amounts to 0.5# PLS for 1500 sq. ft. (0.03 of an acre) for a covey headquarter. For more information regarding covey headquarter establishment see the brochure listed on the website referred to on the last page. Select "Elsberry Center" then "Publications".

Management

During establishment year use a selective grass herbicide post emergence application for control of annual and perennial grasses. For container plants reduce weed competition by mowing or weeding around the base to reduce any shading for the establishing plants.

False indigo bush often has an insect gall form on the stem just below the foliage. It can be pruned off while the tree is dormant. Spraying with imidacloprid (Merit) will also help prevent future insect damage from occurring.

Availability

Illinois Covey Germplasm False Indigo Bush release has been allocated to seed growers by the USDA-NRCS. Small quantities of seed will be available from the Elsberry Plant Materials Center to establish covey headquarter and wildlife plantings.



For More Information

Visit our Plant Materials website at <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov> to find more information on solving conservation problems using plants.

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United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Illinois Covey Germplasm False Indigo Bush (*Amorpha fruticosa*)



**An Improved
Conservation Plant
Developed by
Elsberry
Plant Materials Center
Elsberry, Missouri**