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VA-70 shrub lespedeza





VA-70 shrub lespedeza along the side of a channel

VA-70 shrub lespedeza

Farm game, such as the bobwhite quail, depend more and more each year on habitat developed by land-owners. The farm economic squeeze has forced land-owners to intensify their farming. This has eliminated many natural hedgerows, weedy fence rows, and other areas that once provided good game habitat. The farmer interested in game must now establish wildlife habitat in odd areas such as fence corners and bare strips between fields and woodland.

VA-70 shrub lespedeza (*Lespedeza thunbergii* (DC.) Nakai) is an excellent source of food for wildlife. Pheasants and bobwhite quail use its seed for food in fall and winter. Rabbit and deer browse the leaves and bees produce honey from the flowers.

You can use VA-70 shrub lespedeza almost anywhere that shrubs are appropriate. When used in hedges and borders, VA-70 is an attractive landscape feature. The plant is particularly well suited to seeding steep banks

along channels and ditches or for wildlife borders along these water courses. It is useful as a border between cropland and woodland, as contour hedges between crop strips, along diversion terrace boundaries, and in small odd areas set aside for wildlife.

VA-70 shrub lespedeza can be used alone or with other plants. Switchgrass and shrub lespedeza are a particularly productive combination for improving wildlife habitat. Switchgrass remains standing most of the winter to provide cover and shrub lespedeza offers excellent food and additional cover.

Description

VA-70 shrub lespedeza is a herbaceous legume with a semiwoody stem. It is an upright perennial and its stems grow 4 to 6 feet tall. The leaves are more linear than oval and they are about 2 inches long and one-half inch wide. Attractive pink to purple flowers appear in late summer. The seeds are black and mature from early September in Virginia to late October in New Jersey. A vigorous solid stand will produce 300 to 500 pounds of seed per acre each year.

Even after its leaves drop about the time of the first killing frost, shrub lespedeza is still effective as a conservation plant. The fallen leaves form a mulch that usually remains on the ground throughout the winter and protects the soil.

The seeds of VA-70 shatter shortly after they mature. They are hard and deteriorate slowly when in contact with the soil. Some remain on the ground until early spring. These qualities make VA-70 very useful as a food source for wildlife.

Availability

For more information on where to buy VA-70 shrub lespedeza and how to use and plant it, contact your local SCS office. It is listed in your telephone directory under U.S. Government, Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. Assistance is available without regard to race, creed, color, sex, or national origin.

Establishment

You can establish VA-70 shrub lespedeza by direct seeding. First you must prepare a seedbed that is firm and free of weeds. The best time to plant is mid-spring. Planting should not be delayed past May 30 in the shrub's northern range of adaptation or April 30 in its southern range.

VA-70 seed should be inoculated with a specific Rhizobium inoculum at the time of planting. Use 10 to 14 pounds of seed per acre. Apply the seed at the lower rate if it is scarified and at the higher rate if it is not. Seed at a depth of one-half to 1 inch. Broadcast the seed



Field hedgerow of VA-70 shrub lespedeza.

on a well-prepared area and then use a cultipacker or roller. If you prefer, you can drill the seed with a conventional grain drill or cultipacker seeder.

Use the same establishment techniques if you are seeding a grass-legume mixture of switchgrass and shrub lespedeza. From 5 to 7 pounds of switchgrass seed and 10 to 14 pounds of VA-70 seed will provide a good mixture.

Apply fertilizer before or at the time of seeding according to soil tests. If no test is available, apply 300 to 500 pounds of 0-12-12 or 0-20-20 fertilizer per acre.



Detail of VA-70 shrub lespedeza showing leaves and flowers.

Apply lime to reach a pH level of 6.5 if the pH is below 5.5. Do not use a nurse crop when seeding.

You may need to control weeds the first year after planting. If so, it is best to mow when the weeds are 18 to 24 inches tall and cut them to the height of the lespedeza.

Severely eroding sites should be mulched after planting. Mulch helps retain moisture, reduce erosion, and hold seeds in place, particularly on steep banks. You can use wood fiber mulch, wood chips, sawdust, hay, or straw to form a thin mulch covering.

You can also establish VA-70 shrub lespedeza by using year-old seedlings grown in nurseries. If you use seedlings, follow conventional tree planting procedures. This method is more expensive than direct seeding but produces a usable stand more quickly.

Commercial Seed Production

You can produce VA-70 seed on most well-drained, tillable soils. If possible, use a field that has been cultivated for a few years. Prepare a clean, firm seedbed. To establish the plants, follow the directions given in the preceding section.

You can harvest VA-70 by direct combining. Combined material should be air dried to prevent heating that could damage the seed.

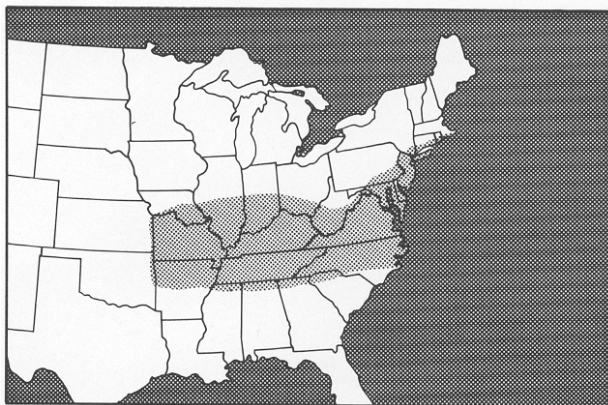
Each pod that you harvest will contain a single seed. Seeds are easily removed from the pods. Clean them using standard seed cleaning procedures.



VA-70 shrub lespedeza adjacent to a soybean field.

Adaptation

VA-70 shrub lespedeza is adapted to droughty, well-drained, and somewhat poorly drained soils. It does not grow well in poorly drained or extremely acid soils. Soil texture does not have a critical effect on growth. The plant grows well along the central East Coast and inland to Missouri and northern Arkansas. (See the adaptation map.)



Area of adaptation of VA-70 shrub lespedeza.