

SHOWY PARTRIDGE PEA

Chamaecrista fasciculata

(Michx.) Greene

Plant Symbol = CHFA2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials
Program and the Manhattan Plant Materials Center,
Manhattan, Kansas



R. Alan Shadow, USDA NRCS East Texas Plant Materials Center

Alternate Names

Cassia chamaecrista L., *C. fasciculata* Michx.,
sleeping plant, prairie partridge pea, prairie senna,
large-flowered sensitive-pea, dwarf cassia, partridge
pea senna, locust weed, golden cassia

Uses

Wildlife: This plant provides food for birds. The seed
is one of the major food items of northern bobwhite
and quail because it remains in sound condition
throughout the winter and early spring.

Erosion control: The plant can be used along road
banks and stream banks to control erosion.

Recreation and beautification: The flowers of this
plant can be used to beautify areas where wildflowers
are planted. Partridge pea is commonly grown as an
ornamental. The bright yellow flowers make it a
popular choice for use in native gardens.

Livestock Caution: *Although partridge pea foliage is
nutritious, it can be poisonous and should be
considered potentially dangerous to cattle.*

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State
Department of Natural Resources for this plant's
current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species,
state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

Showy partridge pea [*Chamaecrista fasciculata*
(Michx.) Greene] is an annual erect legume plant that
reaches a height of 1 to 3 feet. The leaves consist of
10 to 16 pairs of small, narrow leaflets that are
somewhat delicate to the touch. The showy yellow
flowers, about 1 inch across, grow 2 to 4 together in
clusters on the stem. Flowers normally bloom July-
September. The fruit is a straight, narrow pod 1½ to
2½ inches long, which splits along 2 sutures as it
dries; the pod sides spiral to expel the seeds some
distance from the parent plant. The highest seed
production has been obtained under 30% shade,
followed in decreasing order by 55% shade, full
sunlight, and dense shade.

Adaptation and Distribution

This plant grows on a wide range of soils that are
slightly acid to moderately alkaline. However, it
grows best on moderately lime, well drained soils. It
is important to use an adapted strain to ensure that
successful reseeding will occur.

Showy partridge pea is distributed throughout the
Midwestern and eastern United States. For a current
distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile
page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

Establishment

Established stands should be disked lightly in the
spring to expose mineral soil on which the seed can
germinate. Drill seeds at 1/4 to 3/4 inch deep at a
rate of 10 lbs/ac pure live seed. If the seed is
broadcast, increase seeding rate and cover seed by
lightly disking or by cultipacking. Planting should be
conducted late winter (March) to late spring (May)

while soil moisture is still high. Germination is improved by scarification of the seed prior to planting. Seed should also be inoculated with the correct species of *rhizobium* before planting. Fertilizer should be applied at the recommended rate, based on soil samples, at time of planting.

Management

Partridge pea usually reseeds but will gradually disappear without regular maintenance. Light disking to remove weeds, small brush, and old sod is necessary for healthy plantings or natural stands. In areas where prescribed burning is permitted, controlled fire is an excellent method for controlling unwanted vegetation. Fire or disking should be done in late winter for best results. Weeds can also be controlled during the growing season by mowing over the top of the partridge pea.

Pests and Potential Problems

No pests reported at this time. Some sources report that this species has invasive qualities. See the PLANTS Plant Profile for this species. *Although partridge pea foliage is nutritious, it can be poisonous and should be considered potentially dangerous to cattle.*

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

'Comanche' (TX), 'Riley' (KS), and Lark Selection (AR), Comanche (cultivar) was released by the James E. 'Bud' Smith Plant Materials Center (PMC), Knox City, Texas, Riley (cultivar) was released by the Manhattan PMC, Manhattan, Kansas. Lark Selection is a selected class release from the Jamie L. Whitten PMC, Coffeerville, Mississippi.

Prepared By:

USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program and *John M. Row*, Plant Materials Center, Manhattan, Kansas

Species Coordinator:

Morris J. Houck, USDA NRCS, Alexandria, Louisiana

Edited: 01Feb2002 JLK; 01Jun06 jsp; 070820 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities

who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Read about [Civil Rights at the Natural Resources Conservation Service](#).