

WOOLLYPOD VETCH

Vicia villosa Roth ssp. *varia*
(Host) Corb.

Plant Symbol = VIVIV8

*Contributed by: USDA NRCS California State Office
and Lockeford Plant Materials Center, California*



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Alternate Names

Hairy vetch, winter vetch, woolly vetch

Uses

Range Improvement: Woollypod vetch is particularly valuable for improving the quantity and quality of annual range in the Mediterranean-like climatic zone.

Noxious Weed Control: Woollypod vetch has been used successfully to suppress such weeds as star thistle and medusahead, an unpalatable grass invading annual range. Because Woollypod vetch can be established from direct seeding without seed preparation, it offers a very practical method of weed control on rough terrain.

Erosion Control and Beautification: Woollypod vetch has been widely used for revegetating critical areas and stabilizing soils on roadbanks, channel banks, dikes, and dams. In these situations, it has added attractiveness because of the beauty of its flowers.

Wildlife: Woollypod vetch seed is utilized by most seed-eating birds. It is especially attractive to doves, quail and pigeons. The vine-like growth provides excellent nesting cover for many ground-nesting

birds. It is especially valuable for pheasant habitat along ditches and fence lines in cropland areas.

Covercrop: Woollypod vetch may be used as a substitute for purple vetch in cover crop and green manure seedings. Because it matures relatively early and reseeds well, Woollypod vetch can be used where a perpetuating annual cover is desired.

Ethnobotanical Uses: Woollypod vetch, part of the Fabaceae family was used as a dermatological and gastrointestinal aid taken for sores and stomach pain respectively.

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).

Weediness

This plant may become weedy or invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. Please consult with your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative Extension Service office, or state natural resource or agriculture department regarding its status and use. Weed information is also available from the PLANTS website.

Description

Legume Family (Fabaceae). Woollypod vetch is an introduced, self-seeding, cool season annual legume similar in appearance to other annual and perennial vetches. The leaves are compound and each usually possess 10-20 narrowly oval, pointed leaflets. Flowers are born in long clusters called racemes. Each raceme usually has 5-15 flowers. The color of the flowers is pinkish-purple compared with the reddish-purple of purple vetch. The growth form of woollypod vetch is semi-prostrate with trailing stems up to three feet long. It will climb on a any available support, such as brush or the stiff stems of grass and grain.

Distribution

Woollypod vetch is found in the California Floristic Province and throughout the rest of the United States. For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Adaptation

Woollypod vetch performs well on light to heavy textured soils when the annual rainfall is 14 inches or more. It can be grown in low rainfall desert areas when irrigation water is applied. It is adapted to moderately acid to moderately alkaline soils. In California, it can grow in the coastal and central valleys up to about 3000 feet. In other parts of the United States, it grows along roadsides, fields and urban waste areas.

Establishment

A seedbed should be prepared for the best establishment of Woollypod vetch. Drilling at one inch depth with or without seedbed preparation has been superior to broadcast seeding. All broadcast seeding should be harrowed or lightly disked after planting. Woollypod vetch is drilled 12 pounds per acre and broadcast at 16 pounds per acre. Seed should be inoculated with the proper bacteria before planting.

Management

Range Improvement: As forage, Woollypod vetch is best used when mature. Deferment insures maximum production and seed set for perpetuation. The high protein content of mature, dry Woollypod vetch contrasts with the lower nutritive value of dry annual range. Woollypod vetch provides high quality feed in the summer and early fall when native annual range requires supplementation. On most soils in California, a significant response is obtained when Woollypod vetch is fertilized with phosphorus and sulfur. A general recommendation is to fertilize with 200-500 pounds per acre of single superphosphate at the time of planting with a similar application every two or three years following. Treble superphosphate can be used in areas where no sulfur deficiency exists.

Noxious Weed Control: Studies have shown that the keys to weed suppression using Woollypod vetch are annual fertilization with phosphorus and sulfur, deferred grazing, and broadcast seeded at a rate of 20 pounds per acre.

Critical Area Stabilization: Woollypod vetch can be broadcast seeded at 15 pounds per acre and drilled at 10 pounds per acre with an annual grass. The following seeding rates for grasses in the mixture are recommended: Blando brome- broadcast-seeded at 9 pounds per acre and drilled at 6 pounds per acre; Cucamonga broadcasted-seeded at 25 pounds per acre and drilled at a rate of 16 pounds per acre.

Pests and Potential Problems

Woollypod vetch stands have been injured by a disease known as black stem, *Micospharella ssp.* in certain areas along the North Coast in California. The effects have been sporadic. Some years no damage is observed. If the disease is suspected, the seed should be treated with a fungicide at the time of planting. In stands where it occurs, a one year rotation with another crop will generally destroy the residue which harbors the pathogen.

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

'Lana' Cultivar- is a commercially available variety of Woollypod vetch. Lana is the earliest maturing vetch available. It blooms about two weeks earlier than hairy vetch and produces a moderate amount of hard seed. These characteristics are responsible for the ability of Lana to perpetuate under range conditions. Lana was selected and developed at Pleasanton by the USDA Soil Conservation Service Plant Materials Center in cooperation with the University of California Agronomy Department, Davis, from material introduced from Turkey in 1937.

Control

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control methods named, and other products may be equally effective.

References

USDA NRCS. 1973. *Management and uses of woollypod vetch*. Berkeley, California.

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