

'AU Early Cover' Hairy Vetch (*Vicia villosa* Roth.)

A Conservation Plant Released by the USDA NRCS Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center, Americus, Georgia



'AU Early Cover' Hairy Vetch in Bloom

'AU Early Cover' hairy vetch (*Vicia villosa* Roth.) is a cultivar released in 1994 in cooperation with Auburn University and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Stations.

Description

'AU Early Cover' is a naturalized cool season annual legume. It has a trailing habit with clasping tendrils. Vegetation averages 2 to 3 feet tall. Compound leaves can have 10 to 20 pairs of leaflets. Stems can grow 2 to 5 feet long. It produces racemes of purple blooms in April. It blooms 30 to 37 days earlier than other commercial hairy vetches. Tan colored legume seed pods are ready for harvest in May. Each pod produces several round black seed.

Source

'AU Early Cover' was developed from germplasm collected in Henry County Alabama. Thirty-three seedlings from the original collection were selected for early development, vigor and disease resistance. Three selected lines were increased and combined to produce the cultivar 'AU Early Cover'. It was tested in Americus, Georgia and in five sites from North to South Alabama.

Conservation Uses

The primary uses for 'AU Early Cover' are green manure crop, organic farming, pollinator habitat improvement, and a cover crop for conservation tillage. By mid-February, other commercial hairy vetch has little accumulated growth; it can produce 150 to 200 pounds of dry matter per acre. This provides earlier and more complete coverage for conservation tillage.

Area of Adaptation and Use

This cultivar is especially adapted to upland well-drained soils in the central and southern region of Alabama and Georgia. Reports indicate it can grow north to Kentucky and northern Mississippi and west to eastern Texas.

Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

Seedbed preparation should begin well in advance of planting. Prior to planting, the site should be firm and have accumulated soil moisture. 'AU Early Cover' can be broadcast or drilled. To achieve maximum cool season coverage use 30 pounds of inoculated seed per acre. It is planted in the fall in north Alabama and north Georgia from September 1 to October 15, in south Alabama and south Georgia from September 15 to November 1. Soil pH should be raised to 6.0. Apply fertilizer as recommended by soil test. Planting depth should be .5 to 1 inch. When using the cultivar for conservation tillage, systemic herbicides produce a more complete kill than contact herbicides. A complete kill of vegetation improves planting efficiency of the summer crop.



Evaluation and Selection of 'AU Early Cover'

Ecological Considerations

This cultivar does not have resistance to disease or insects beyond those commonly found in the species. The Jimmy Carter PMC applies an insecticide at 75% bloom and again two weeks later to control vetch weevil infestation in seed production fields. A mixture of tillage and herbicides usually controls weed problems from this cultivar.

Seed and Plant Production

Harvest of 'AU Early Cover' is by direct combining. In Americus, Georgia, harvest is from mid April-mid May. Normal yields are approximately 300 to 400 pounds of seed per acre.

Availability

'AU Early Cover' seed is produced by Improved Forages Corp (Southern Proprietary Seeds Inc.)



'AU Early Cover' Production Field

For more information, contact:

Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center, 295
Morris Drive Americus, Georgia 31719,
Phone 229-924-4499, Fax 229-924-0013,
<http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

Citation:

Fact Sheet for 'AU Early Cover', hairy vetch (*Vicia villosa* Roth.). USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Jimmy Carter PMC. Americus, Georgia 31719. Published [February, 2012]

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