

## Description

‘AU GroundCover’ caley pea (*Lathyrus hirsutus* L.) is a naturalized cool season annual legume. It has an ascending or sprawling habit with glabrous winged stems. Vegetation averages up to 30 inches tall at flowering time. It produces racemes of pink, blue-purple or bicolored blooms in mid-spring. Tan to brown colored legume seed pods are very hirsute and dehisce at maturity (usually June). Each pod produces several round dark brown seed.



## Development and Adaptation

AU GroundCover was developed from five different germplasms collected in the Black Belt Region of Alabama. Caley peas are self pollinated plants therefore the five lines of germplasm were blended together to produce AU GroundCover. Tests

conducted in Alabama and Georgia showed forage yields of AU GroundCover were similar to commercial hairy vetch (*Vicia villosa*). Crude protein content of 20% has been reported at flowering. It is especially adapted to heavy calcareous clay soils of the Mississippi and Alabama Black Belt Region.

## Establishment and Management

Seedbed preparation should begin well in advance of planting. Prior to planting, the site should be firm and have accumulated soil moisture. AU GroundCover can be broadcast or drilled. For maximum coverage a planting rate of 50 pounds per acre is recommended. Scarified seed will need to be inoculated with type C inoculant. Plant in early to mid-fall. Soil pH should be raised to 6.0. Apply fertilizer according to soil test recommendations. Planting depth should be .5 to 1 inch. Seed yield can vary due to seed shatter but yields of 100 to 150 pounds per acre are normal. When using AU GroundCover for conservation tillage, systemic herbicides produce a more complete kill than contact herbicides. A complete kill of vegetation improves conditions for planting a summer crop in a conservation tillage system.



## Conservation Uses

Uses for AU GroundCover include green manure crop, habitat for pollinators, cover crop for conservation tillage, and especially forage. Forage production season is increased when grass based forages are grown in conjunction with this legume. Research has shown that forage yields in Johnsongrass (*Sorghum halepense*) and dallisgrass (*Paspalum dilatatum*) hayfields increase more with caley pea than with any other cool-season legume.



## Availability

Breeder seed of AU GroundCover caley pea is being maintained at the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center in Americus, Georgia. Southern Proprietary Seeds Inc. Lake Oswego, Oregon is producing other classes of AU GroundCover for public utilization.

## For More Information

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

OR Contact

Your local USDA Natural Resources  
Conservation Service Office

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## AU GroundCover Caley Pea

*Lathyrus hirsutus* L.



**Jimmy Carter  
Plant Materials Center  
Americus, Georgia**