

Background:

Sericea Lespedeza, or Chinese Bush Clover, is a perennial legume native to eastern Asia. They were originally introduced to provide soil erosion, forage for livestock, and food/cover for wildlife. From those situations, it has spread into native prairies and unmanaged areas.



Sericea Lespedeza in early summer

Sericea Lespedeza

(Lespedeza cuneata)

Impact on Native Habitat:

Sericea Lespedeza grows in densely formed patches shading out and out competing other native vegetation within a prairie or other grassland area. This results in a great reduction of food and cover available for wildlife. Infestations can inhibit native forb and warm season grass establishment. They also compete for soil moisture, nutrients, and crowd out other plants. Sericea contains about 1,000 seeds per stem and spreads by reseeding itself.

Identification

Leaves: These vertical growing herbaceous plants have alternate compound trifoliate leaves. The oblong leaflets are about 3/4" long and 1/4" across. The blade of each leaflet often angles upward along the central vein and has smooth margins.



Stems: The stems are stiff and straight, often forming clumps from a common base. They are light green round and covered with small white hairs. Stems become brown and woody with maturity.



Flowers: Typically have a pea-like structure and develop from the stalk. Petals are white with a small patch of purple. The blooming period usually occurs during early fall



Seeds: Seedpod is small brown and pubescent. Each seedpod contains a single seed.



Active Growing Season



Eradication Schedule

How to Kill: Eradication

- 1. **Hand pulling-** When the plant is small and the soil is moist, hand pulling is an option if the entire plant can be removed, including the roots. This is a very labor intensive method, requiring surveying the same acreage year after year to pull the resprouts.
- 2. **Grazing Method-** with high stocking densities, grazing may be effective control if done in early Spring with new growth. Goats will kill adult plants within 3 years but can spread seed to new areas.

- 3. **Foliar spray-** This involves spraying the leaves with a solution of properly labeled herbicide plus a non-ionic surfactant, which improves the chemicals ability to adhere and absorb into the plant. This method should be used during the active growing season so care should be taken to avoid spraying non-target species.
- 4. **Prescribed Fire-** Timing of fire can be an effective control. Fire may kill seedlings but can cause a flush of growth from the seedbank. When used with herbicide, this can exhaust the seedbank at an increased rate.



Sericea Lespedeza after treatment