



# Kansas Plant Pest Alert

Kansas Department of Agriculture • Plant Protection and Weed Control • (785) 564-6698 • agriculture.ks.gov

## Sericea Lespedeza



Photo: James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

### What is sericea lespedeza?

Sericea lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata* (Dum. Cours.) G. Don), or Chinese bush clover, is an introduced, invasive, perennial legume species native to eastern and central Asia. The plant was originally introduced into the United States in 1896 at the North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station.

Since then, plantings have occurred throughout the eastern half of the country for erosion control, wildlife cover and food, and as a forage crop for hay.

### What does it look like?

It is a shrubby perennial, 2 to 5 feet tall with numerous branching stems. New growth arises from a woody caudex or crown, 1 to 3 inches below the soil. The trifoliate (three-parted) leaves are crowded along the stems and branches with each leaf attached by a short petiole. Each leaflet is wedge- or club-shaped, ¼ to 1 inch long, and ⅛ to ¼ inch wide. Flowers are cream-colored with pink markings, ¼ inch long, and occur in the upper leaf axils from mid-July to October. Seeds are ⅛ to ⅜ inch long and green to tan in color.

### How do I treat and control an infestation?

Quick identification and eradication is essential to prevent its spread. Once established, under ideal conditions, the plants can produce over 1,500 seeds per stem, with 300 to 850 pounds of seed per acre.

#### Cultural Controls

Burning/Grazing – Prescribed burning during late spring, followed by grazing infested areas with cattle, sheep and/or goats can provide effective control. Late grazing or no grazing will actually increase the density of the plants after burning.

Mowing – Mowing in the late bud stage for 2 to 3 consecutive years from mid-July to late summer should reduce the vigor of stands.

#### Herbicide Controls

Treating pastures and rangelands with Triclopyr or Triclopyr + Fluroxypyr when plants are 12 to 15 inches tall in late spring provides effective control. Alternatively, treating stands after the bud/bloom stage during late July to first frost with Metsulfuron methyl is also an effective chemical control.



Unfortunately, the plant is very difficult to eradicate once it becomes established.

**If you find sericea lespedeza, notify the Kansas Department of Agriculture, or your County Noxious Weed Department!**

### Where is sericea lespedeza in Kansas?

It is found primarily in the eastern half of Kansas. Inventory results collected during 2009 identified more than 621,000 acres infested in 69 Kansas counties. The plant is especially pervasive in the Flint Hills with many counties in the region reporting 20,000 acres or more of infestation.



Photo: Dan Tenaglia, MissouriPlants.com, Bugwood.org

  
 Department of Agriculture

Plant Protection and Weed Control  
 1320 Research Park Drive  
 Manhattan, KS 66502  
 (785) 564-6698

agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/plant-protect-weed-control