

Sericea lespedeza

Colorado Dept. of
Agriculture,
Conservation
Services Division
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Key ID Points

1. Erect stems with stiff hairs reaching 5 feet tall.
2. Green leaves that are divided into 3 smaller linear leaflets.

Sericea lespedeza Identification and Management



Identification and Impacts

Sericea lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata*) is an introduced, shrubby perennial legume that can grow to five feet tall. Stems are erect with stiff hairs. Leaves are alternate and divided into three smaller, linear leaflets. The leaflets are a green-gray to ashy color. Flowers emerge from the leaf axis (between the leaf and stem) and can be alone or in clusters of two to four. Flowers are white with violet or purple markings. They emerge late July to October. Each stem produces over 1,000 seeds which remain viable for 20 years or more.

Habitat for sericea lespedeza include woodlands, thickets, fields, prairies, disturbed open grounds, meadows, pastures, borders of ponds, swamps, and especially roadsides. The plant is native to Asia and has a great resistance to drought and shade. Sericea lespedeza can establish dense stands on sterile, steep, or eroded soil.

Sericea lespedeza reduces or eliminates vegetation used for livestock and wildlife forage. It contains high levels of tannins which make it unpalatable to grazers. The plant requires more water than other warm-season plants, creating

a “drought” for competing species. Sericea lespedeza also produces allelopathic chemicals, which inhibit seed germination and growth of many native plants. The soil seed reserve is unknown. The site must be monitored for at least 10 years after the last flowering adult plants have been eliminated and treatments repeated when necessary.

The key to effective control of sericea lespedeza is early detection, isolation of infested areas, and treatment of individual plants with appropriate herbicides. When infestations are large, an integrated approach will be effective. Details on the back of this sheet can help to create a management plan compatible with your site ecology.

Sericea lespedeza is designated as a “List A” species in the Colorado Noxious Weed Act. It is required to be eradicated wherever found in the State. For more information visit www.colorado.gov/ag/csd and click on the Noxious Weed Management Program. Or call the State Weed Coordinator at the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Conservation Services Division, 303-239-4100.



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Lespedeza cuneata

**CULTURAL**

Cultural control options are limited when dealing with sericea lespedeza. The plants exhibit tolerance to shade, and have allelopathic characteristics when mature.

**BIOLOGICAL**

Biocontrol agents are not included in the prescribed management plans by the State. Eradication is the management objective of all List A's. No biocontrol agent for sericea lespedeza is available. For more information on biocontrol in Colorado, please contact the Palisade Insectary of the Colorado Department of Agriculture at 970-464-7916.

**MECHANICAL**

Hand pulling or digging is NOT a recommended eradication method because sericea lespedeza has a deep and branching root system. Mowing can reduce vigor, limiting production of essential carbohydrates in the root system. The most effective time to mow is late in the growing season.

Integrated Weed Management:

Early detection and eradication, isolation of infested areas, and spot treatments with appropriate herbicides of individual plants proves to be the most effective control. An integrated approach, of grazing management, burning, mowing and application of herbicides, when infestations are extensive.

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HERBICIDES

NOTE: The following are recommendations for herbicides that can be applied to range and pasturelands. Rates are approximate and based on equipment with an output of 30 gal/acre. Please read label for exact rates. **Always read, understand, and follow the label directions. The herbicide label is the LAW!**

HERBICIDE	RATE	APPLICATION TIMING
Metsulfuron (Escort XP - general use)	1 oz producer/acre plus 0.25% v/v non-ionic surfactant	Apply at flower bud initiation, bud to early flower growth stages. (Spring to Late Summer)
Triclopyr (Remedy or Garlon 4 - general use)	1 qt product/acre	Apply during vegetative growth or flower growth stages. (Spring to Late Summer)