

Lespedeza cuneata (Dum.-Cours.) G. Don

Common Name: Sericea lespedeza (Chinese lespedeza, Chinese bushclover)

Growth Form: Forb

Life Span: Perennial

Origin: Asia

Flowering Dates: July-October

Reproduction: Seeds

Height: 0.5-2 m (1.5-6.5 ft)

Inflorescence: Clusters of 2-4 (usually 2) flowers, sometimes solitary, axillary

Flower: White or cream to yellowish-white corolla, marked with purple or pink along the veins of the banner petal (6-9 mm long); wings and keel equal, shorter than the banner; typical 5-petaled legume flower; calyx tube silky (0.5-1 mm long), teeth 5; teeth lance-subulate (3-5 mm long)

Fruit: Pod (legume), oval (2.5-3.5 mm long), glabrate or with appressed pubescence; seeds 1

Seed: Ellipsoid to ovoid (1.5-2.5 mm long), slightly flattened, brown to olive, often mottled with brown

Leaves: Alternate; blades pinnately 3-foliolate; leaflets cuneate (1-2.5 cm long), erect or ascending, tips round to flat with a mucro, upper surfaces without hair to pubescent, lower surfaces pubescent; stipules setaceous (3-12 mm long); petioles reduced upward (1-5 mm long)

Stems: Erect; branches numerous, straight, slender, grooved, pubescent; mature stems somewhat woody with small bristles or spines

Underground: Taproot

Where Found: Southeastern Great Plains in grasslands, abandoned fields, roadsides, stream valleys, open woods, thickets, and waste places. Sericea lespedeza is most common in well-drained soils. (NE, KS, OK, TX, IA, & MO)

Uses and Values: Forage quality of sericea lespedeza is low. Foliage is eaten by deer, rabbits, and wild turkeys. Seeds are eaten by quail and other birds.

Poisoning: It contains relatively high levels of tannins which do not poison, but they reduce forage digestibility.

Historical: It was introduced into the southern United States for forage in the 1800s, and it is still grown for hay in that region.

Other: Sericea lespedeza has spread rapidly as a contaminant in grass seed. It is highly competitive. Seeds remain viable in the soil for more than 20 years.



MITCHELL COPPIN

Flowers are white or cream to yellowish-white and are marked with purple or pink.