

Chinese lespedeza

Lespedeza cuneata

Description

Introduced to North America as forage and for hay production on poor soils, as well as erosion control. Extremely aggressive invader because of its large seed bank which stays viable for decades.

Habit

Warm season, perennial, herbaceous, erect growth, ranging from 3-6 ft (0.9-1.8 m) in height.

Leaves

Alternate, thin, divided into 3 smaller leaflets, 1/2-1 in long, narrowly oblong and pointed, awl-shaped spines, leaflets covered with densely flattened hairs, grayish-green or silver appearance.

Stems



Erect; woody and fibrous when mature; covered with sharp, stiff flattened bristles; can reach a height of 3-6 ft (0.9-1.8 m).

Flowers

Small, about 1/4 in; creamy white to pale yellow in color with pink to purple colored veins; single or in clusters of 2-4, from the axils of the upper and median leaves; blooms late July through October.

Fruits and Seeds

Single seed per flower, small, shiny and slightly flattened, ellipsoid to oval in shape, tan, olive, purple or brown in color.

Habitat

Native to Asia. Found in severely eroded sterile soils, woodlands, grasslands, savannas, roadsides, fence rows, fields, prairies, drainage areas, wetland borders of ponds and swamps, meadows and open disturbed ground.

Reproduction

By seed, which can remain viable for 20 years or more.

Similar

Roundhead lespedeza (*Lespedeza capitata*) has much less branches and leaflets are longer and broader in size.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Mow plants in the flower bud stage for 2-3 consecutive years, cut plants low to the ground; burning is not recommended as it can result in even more plants; can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as triclopyr, glyphosate, clopyralid, and metsulfuron methyl, in early to mid-summer. Follow label and state requirements.

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