



# Sericea Lespedeza

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



**Synonyms:** *Anthyllis cuneata* Dum. Cours., *Aspalathus cuneata* D. Don. *Hedysarum sericeum* Thunb., *Lespedeza juncea* var. *sericea* Forbes & Hemsl., *Lespedeza sericea* Benth., *Lespedeza sericea* Miq.

**Common Names:** Chinese lespedeza, Chinese bush clover, sericea lespedeza, sericea bush clover, silky bush clover, Himalayan bush clover and hairy lespedeza



**Native Origin:** Asia; introduced in the 1940's for use as forage and hay production on poor soils, and for erosion control

**Description:** A perennial herbaceous plant in the pea family (*Fabaceae*) with an erect growth ranging from 3 to 5 feet in height. Leaves are compound, alternate with 3 leaflets (trifoliate). Leaflets are about 1/2 to 1 inch long, narrowly oblong, sharply-pointed with small flattened hairs, and a grayish-green or silvery color. Mature stems are somewhat woody and fibrous with bristly hairs on ridges. Flowers are small (about 1/4 in.) creamy white to yellow-white with pink to purple colored veins. Flowers bloom from late July to October and emerge either singly or in clusters of 2-4, from the axils of the upper and median leaves. Flowers produce one small seed that are shiny, slightly flattened, ellipsoid to oval, and tan, olive, purple, or brown in color. Reproduction is primarily by seed that can remain viable in the soil for twenty years or more. The root system is made up of a woody taproot that branches laterally and grows 3 to 4 feet deep.



**Habitat:** It can grow in a variety of habitats including severely eroded sterile soils. It will invade open woodlands, grasslands, savannas, roadsides, fence rows, fields, prairies, drainage areas, wetland borders of ponds and swamps, meadows, and open disturbed ground. It is tolerant of light to moderate shade, but will not survive heavy shade. It will grow under red cedar trees and in areas with a canopy, but thin mid-story.

**Distribution:** This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in AR, DC, GA, IN, KY, MD, MO, NC, NJ, NY, TN, VA, WI, and WV.

**Ecological Impacts:** It is a threat to open areas such as meadows, prairies, open woodlands, wetland borders and fields where it can crowd out native plants and develop extensive seed banks in the soil.

### Control and Management:



Sericea Lespedeza infestation

- **Manual-** Mow plants in the flower bud stage for two or three consecutive years to reduce or prevent the production of seed. Cut plants low to the ground minimizing impacts to adjacent native plants. *Note:* Burning at any time of year scarifies seed in the seed bank and can result in more plants. The deep root system of this species makes removal by digging or pulling extremely difficult.
- **Chemical-** It 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. Repeated applications may be necessary. One combination method of control is: Spray glyphosate on new vegetation (sprouts and seedlings), follow with a prescribed burn, and then seed heavily with annual cereal grains and warm season grasses. Follow label and state requirements.

**References:** [www.forestimages.org](http://www.forestimages.org), <http://plants.usda.gov>, [www.nps.gov/plants/alien](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien), Czarapata, Elizabeth J. Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest, An Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control, 2005 p. 137-138, [www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/lecu1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/lecu1.htm) <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/documnts/lespcun.pdf>