

# SERICEA LESPEDEZA

## POOR MANS LUCERN

### OVERVIEW

Sericea lespedeza offers numerous advantages as a forage crop. It is a drought-tolerant, non-bloating perennial legume; it is resistant to diseases and is rarely attacked by insects; and mature plants are quite competitive with grasses. It is much more tolerant of soil acidity than most other legumes and is also very tolerant of low fertility. Forage yields of sericea are good, and forage quality is better than most warm season perennial grasses. It is a surprisingly economical forage crop to grow due to the fact that it does not require any nitrogen fertilizer. It has also been well documented that sericea is an excellent soil builder. Lespedeza will grow on almost any soil. It does well on sandy and loam-type soils. Sericea is a deeprooted perennial that also does well on shallow soils with drainage restrictions.

Lespedeza will tolerate lower pH (more acid) soils than clover. Tannin is the compound that confers the nonbloating characteristic to lespedeza, but it also decreases palatability and digestibility.

Low tannin varieties are now available. These have greatly improved forage quality, finer stems and contain enough tannin to prevent bloat. Sericea lespedeza is deep-rooted. It is the highest-yielding and most drought-tolerant of the lespedezas, and it tolerates the lowest pH and poorest soil. It grows from middle September on the highveld and is killed back to the crown by hard frosts.

- Drought tolerant
- non-bloating perennial legume
- Much more tolerant of soil acidity than most other legumes
- Will grow on almost any soil

