

PLANTING GUIDE

Desmodium canadense L.

Common Names:

showy trefoil
beggars lice
stick tights

Accession Number/Release:

9057110 - Alexander Germplasm

Description:

Showy tick trefoil is a tall (1.3 m) native perennial warm-season legume; one of three leaflets (leaflets are 1/2 to 4 inches long), usually 3-8 times as long as broad, mostly linear-lanceolate to lanceolate; lower surface of leaflets with hairs, when present usually opened (lying parallel to the surface pressed against it); stems nearly glabrous (with-out hairs); leaves cloverlike (three long-oval leaflets); flowers small and papilionaceous, terminal or axillary racemes in summer, mostly purple; blossoms (1/2 in.) in clusters at the summit of a hairy, leafy stem; calyx with a short tube, more or less two-lipped; wings joined to the knee; pod flat, deeply lobed or jointed, the joints often breaking apart and adhering to clothing and to animals by means of small hooked hairs; fruit has three or more segments, resembling a flattened chain of beads; calyx 3 mm long or longer; *Desmodium canadense* differs from *Desmodium illinoense* by having a branched inflorescence with larger flowers that are rose-purple and change to blue with age. *D. canadense* is a more robust plant and has a fruit with one straight margin and one curved or obtusely angled margin. Articles are densely pubescent. Tick trefoil is open pollinated and occurs in prairies, wet meadows in valleys, along spring branches, and open thickets. Tick trefoil ranges from Quebec, Canada to North Dakota and Saskatchewan, south to Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Oklahoma.



Purpose:

Tick trefoil is used for wildlife food and cover (quail, pheasants, turkey, ground birds and deer), and also used as a small component in a seeding mixture for prairie restoration.

Source:

Seed of Alexander Germplasm tick trefoil was collected from a native stand in Southern Illinois in Alexander County.

Establishment:

Prepare a clean weed free seedbed by disking and harrowing. Firm the seedbed by cultipacking. Seedbed should be firm enough to allow the seed to be planted 1/4 inch deep. A brillion seeder works well in the seeding operation, although other types of seeders or drills may be used. Plants are largely cross-pollinated. Tick trefoil grows well on a wide range of soil types. Seed can be planted in the spring or fall. The seedlings are vigorous; therefore, new plantings can be established quickly. This makes showy tick trefoil especially useful in mixtures with warm-season grasses, many of which do not produce ground cover rapidly. The seed of showy tick trefoil is a high-energy type seed making it an excellent food source for much wildlife. It is ordinarily ready for harvest from September in the South to October in the northern part of the region. Since the seed does shatter when mature, harvesting should be considered when observations reveal some early shattering.

Fertilizer:

Apply no fertilizer the establishment year unless soil test indicates a severe deficiency of potassium and/or phosphorus. Use no nitrogen during the establishment year as this can encourage weed competition.

Seeding Rates:

Seeding rates for showy tick trefoil should be about 3-4 pounds pure live seed (PLS) per acre for wildlife planting. Scarified inoculated ("EL" Culture) seed should always be used. There are approximately 72,500 clean seeds in one pound of showy tick trefoil. Tick trefoil is seeded at 0.5% - 1% of a total seed mixture for prairie restoration.

Seed Dates:

Spring (April to May), summer (August to September), or dormant seeding (November to March). Use scarified inoculated seed.

Management:

Reduce weed competition by mowing at a height that will not affect the tick trefoil seedlings. For grassy weed control use Poast herbicide and follow label recommendations, as herbicide weed control will encourage a good stand.

Note: These herbicide products may not be registered on this legume species in your state.

References:

Flora of Missouri; p. 920; Steyermark, J. A.; Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, 1968.

A Field Guide to Wildflowers; p. 224, 248; Peterson, R. T. and McKenny, Margaret, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Mass, 1968.

Gray's Manual of Botany; p. 1107; Fernald, M. L.; American Book Company; Eighth Edition; Harvard University, 1950.

Wildflowers of the Tallgrass Prairie, The Upper Midwest, p. 165; Runkel, Sylvan T. and Roosa, Dean M.; Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, 1989.

Guide to the Vascular Flora of Illinois; p. 297; Mohlenbrock, Robert H.; Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois, 1986.

American Wildlife & Plants, A Guide to Wildlife Food Habitats, p. 405; Martin, C. Alexander, Zim, Herbert S., and Nelson, Arnold L., Dover Publications, Inc., New York, New York, 1951.

4/27/00

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET Center at 1-202-720-2600 (Voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or 1-202-720-127 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity employer.