



CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM PLANT GUIDE

CICER MILKVETCH

Cultivars: Lutana, Monarch

Seed Size: 145,000 seeds/pound

Form: Long-lived, Rhizomatous,
Legume

Area of Adaptation: Cicer Milkvetch is adapted to areas of the Inland Pacific Northwest that receive at least 14 inches of annual precipitation. It is also adapted to much of the Northern Rocky Mountains, Northern Great Plains, and Northern Great Basin. Cicer Milkvetch was introduced to North America from Europe where it is commonly grown as a pasture and hay forage. Cicer Milkvetch tolerates acidic soil conditions better than alfalfa but does very well on calcareous soils. It tolerates cold soils and greens-up later in the spring than alfalfa. Cicer Milkvetch spreads by rhizomes and by seed.

Seeding: Cicer Milkvetch seed is very hard so the seed must be scarified prior to planting. Seed should be used soon after scarification because the scarification process can reduce storage longevity. Seed must be inoculated with the appropriate rhizobium and planted into a firm, well-packed seedbed. Drills should be set up to place seeds no deeper than 1/2". Broadcast seeding is effective only if the seed is kept shallow and seed-soil contact is adequate. Scarified seed should be planted in the spring for best emergence. Fall planting scarified seed can result in seed disease problems.

Cicer Milkvetch seed is similar in shape and texture to alfalfa, but it is larger than alfalfa seed. Cicer milkvetch seed will fall to the bottom of a drill box if the seed is not agitated. Most mechanical agitators only prevent bridging near the openings on the drill box. The contents of the whole seed box should be manually stirred with a hoe or similar tool on a periodic basis while seeding.

Management & Uses: Shattered seed can persist in the soil for several years which can result in seedling flushes after the stand is removed. However, Cicer Milkvetch seedlings are easily controlled with almost all broadleaf herbicides. The foliage is very succulent, highly palatable and nutritious. Cicer Milkvetch fresh and cured forage is nontoxic to livestock, and it is a preferred wildlife forage. Honey bees readily visit the white flowers which bloom for 2-3 weeks during mid-summer. Cicer Milkvetch seed pods shatter in early fall and the nutritious seed is consumed by birds and rodents.

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