

Scientific Name: *Lespedeza spp.*

Common Name: Lespedeza

Updated: 5/5/2016

A. Priority: D

Description – Chinese lespedeza is a perennial leguminous, up-right forb with one-to-many slender, leafy stems that often branch at mid plant. It generally grows to between three and four feet, and has a woody root crown. Shrubby lespedeza is a much branched, leguminous forb or ascending shrub, from three to ten feet tall. It also has a woody root crown, and tends to be woodier and more robust than *L. cuneata*, with much stouter stems. Dormant brown plants from both species remain upright through the winter. Both species are native to Japan and were introduced to the United States in the late 1800s. Both have also benefitted from long-time programs promoting its use for soil stabilization, erosion control, and wildlife forage. It is now widespread throughout the southeast and was widely planted throughout the NC state parks system until the late 1990s for soil stabilization. Leaves are alternate and have three-leaflets. Each leaflet is oblong and linear 1 – 2 cm long, and 3-8 mm wide, with a hair-like tip. Grey above and dense whitish hairs to light gray beneath. Hairy petioles 5-15 mm long, but missing from upper leaves. Its stems are upright woody and thin. Lespedeza flowers July-September with clusters of white, pea-like flowers in the upper leaf axils. The flowers are shorter than the leaves. Fruits are seen October-March with flat ovate to round single-seeded green (becoming tan) legume pods 3-4 mm wide. Pods are clustered in terminal axils, along stems, and clasped by persistent sepals.

Damage and threats – The species' dense growth habit displaces native vegetation, particularly low-growing herbaceous species. Because it forms dense monocultures, localized impacts to biodiversity and native habitat can be extensive. It will also completely displace grass from cut-and-fill slopes, road shoulders, etc. The displacement of native forage and loss of native species far outweighs its value for soil stabilization or wildlife forage.

B. Management Options

Mechanical Control:

Lespedeza can be controlled but not killed with periodic mowing. If herbicidal control is not used, then the patches should be cut to ground level prior to flowering. Pulling is strongly discouraged due the population's extent and the difficulty of removal, since these species are prone to breaking at the root crown.

Chemical Control: Use of a systematic herbicide is the best option to control Lespedeza. We recommend using aquatic formulations of herbicides in this region to limit potentially unwanted effects to the surrounding environment.

- a. Foliar Spray** – This method involves spraying a dilute herbicide directly onto the plant's leaves. Application needs to occur when foliage is present, sometime between full leaf and the onset of fall for full effectiveness. Caution should be taken

when applying herbicide with this method as non-target plants can easily be killed by drift or overspray. Application should cover at least 80% of the leaves. To treat, use a 2-4% solution of aquatic triclopyr in water with a 0.5% non-ionic surfactant and apply directly to leaves until just before runoff. Air temperatures must be above 65 degrees and winds should be lower than 5 mph.

- b. Cut Stump** – This method involves cutting the stump as close to the ground as possible (no more than 5in.) and immediately applying a systematic herbicide. It is best to use this method between summer and fall, but it may be used as long as the ground is not frozen. To treat using this method, apply a 25-50% formulation of aquatic glyphosate or triclopyr directly to the cut stump.

C. Recommended Management Strategy

- a.** Primarily we recommend a foliar application for all infestations as described above. Monthly mowing over several growing seasons can also control this species.

D. Additional and Updated Information

For additional information including photographs and the most up to date control recommendations please visit www.wachng.org/Plants.