

# Shrub Lespedeza Establishment

## Job Sheet

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)  
University of Missouri Extension – The School of Natural Resources

<b>For:</b>	<b>County:</b>
<b>Field(s):</b>	<b>Farm #:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Tract #:</b>
<b>Designed By:</b>	<b>Contact Information:</b>

### PURPOSES (check all that apply)

- Establish covey headquarters
- Establish travel corridor
- Establish winter cover



Shrub lespedeza provides quick developing cover. In many cases covey headquarters are fully developed in two to three growing seasons. It provides excellent open ground for bird movement while maintaining needed overhead cover.

### PREFERRED VARIETIES FOR MISSOURI

Lespedeza thunbergii or Lespedeza bicolor are the preferred varieties. Lespedeza bicolor is preferred by deer and a stand may not develop in areas with high deer populations.

Shrub lespedeza is a large, leguminous shrub. Allowed to grow naturally, it reaches a height of 8 to 10 feet. The stems are 1 inch or more in diameter at the base and well-branched. If cut back near the ground, the shrub produces numerous stems of lesser diameter and height. Eventually, if not cut back, older stems will gradually die back to the ground to be replaced by new wood. The plant contains an abundance of reserve basal buds, which insure good recovery in case the first tender growth of spring is injured by frost. The plant has a heavy, multi-branching root system.

### ESTABLISHMENT

Begin with a well prepared seedbed. A clean tilled seedbed is preferred. Shrub lespedeza does best in soils in the pH range of 5.7-7.2. The seedbed must be firm and weed free. Any vegetation that would hinder planting or provide excessive competition to the seeding should be removed with the appropriate treatment. No-till drilling into existing

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vegetation is not acceptable. Seed must be inoculated the rhizobia inoculant EL at the time of planting. Dehulled/scarified seed is recommended. The seed coat is hard and should be scarified (scratched or slit to soften the outer coat) for successful germination. Mechanical scarification is preferable because of the simplicity of this method. Check with your seed vendor to ensure that seed is dehulled/scarified.

Seeds/seedlings can be planted as soon as frost danger is past. Seeding can continue up through May 15.

### Methods and Rates:

- Broadcast seed at 10 PLS pounds per acre. Harrow and roll the planted area to ensure soil to seed contact at ½ inch deep.
- Direct seed by drilling at 7 PLS pounds per acre ½ inch deep.
- Seedlings may be planted 2 feet apart within rows with rows being 4 feet apart.

Field(s) or Buffer(s)	Seeding method	Acres to be seeded	Total Pounds seed needed

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### OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE: Care after Planting

*First year maintenance:* Removal of competing vegetation is normally carried out for one growing season following establishment. Lespedeza does not compete well with over-topping weed/grass growth. If annual or perennial grasses become a problem within the stand, use an approved grass herbicide for control. Mowing during the seeding year may be needed for vegetation control. Allow weedy vegetation to grow to a height of 18" to 24" and then mow the weeds to a height equal to the lespedeza plants to remove the overhead plant competition.

*Long-term Management:* Once the stand is established the introduction of management practices is essential to maintain the vegetative community. Mowing, burning (preferred), or light disking in February or March before new growth begins, should be completed every 3-4 years. These disturbance practices will help maintain the vigor of the stand, stimulate growth, and eliminate leaf litter. If mowing is used, 6 to 8 inches of stubble should be left and a follow-up burn to remove the ground residue will provide the best results. Light disking should only be deep enough to remove tall stem residues and scratch the surface of the soil.

### CAUTION:

Shrub lespedeza does not normally spread from seed dispersal in a continuous cropped setting. It provides development of effective quail covey headquarters quickly.

The use of shrub lespedeza in a grassland/idle land setting may require an assessment of any spread and take action if needed to reduce spread. Observations have shown that a limited number of new individual plants may show up in the adjacent grassland 15-50' from original planting after 7-10 years, especially if prescribed burning is used to manage the grassland.

Comment:



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