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**Headline:** Troublesome Pasture Plant of the Week – Sericea Lespedeza



Hermitage, MO - Sericea Lespedeza (Chinese bushclover) is an aggressive invader which, when left unchecked, can overtake your entire field with devastating, long lasting, negative effects. Most grazing livestock, excluding goats, usually will not graze it hard enough to control it. This non-native, warm-season, perennial legume can be found in pastures, hayfields, along roadsides, as well as, open ground throughout the state. This was once promoted as a wildlife friendly erosion control plant and freely given out as seed to be planted. Sericea is ***not*** a hay crop for cattle. This high tannin forage has been shown to reduce internal parasite loads in sheep and goats when grazed fresh. This plant has been declared a noxious weed in Kansas and Colorado.

Sericea Lespedeza is a deep tap rooted plant which can grow to heights of four or more feet depending on the current growing condition at hand. It often is associated with poor ground. Fields which are mowed, raked, and baled for hay yearly, without replacing the fertility being removed, are easily overtaken by this plant. It has a stiff, upright, wood-like stalk which drops its leaves during the winter months. You may find a white stripping look to the stem as well. Several stems may grow from one crown. The leaves are alternately spaced and are divided into a pinnately trifoliate leaf pattern. Leaflets range from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch and are oblong to linear in shape. The leaves may have a hair like appearances on both top and bottom as well as a small pointed tip at the apex. It's white to blue/purple color flower will appear from July to August each year.

As this plant is a very heavy re-seeder, often producing hundreds of seeds from one plant, and several hundreds of pounds of seed per acre on a well-established stand, it must be controlled. These seeds can lay in the ground for well over fifteen years before sprouting, thus making this a plant that will likely return if not managed correctly. Mowing once or twice a year has been known to only increase its density, so this is not a recommended practice for control, nor is

burning as it just makes more weed seeds sprout. PastureGard (2 pts/acre) is the most effective chemical you can use to control Sericea. Other chemicals known to control Sericea, those having metsulfuron as the active ingredient, include Cimarron, Cimarron Max, and Chaparral. Another go to as well would be Remedy (triclopyr). Any and all of these will work well if applied when the plant is 14 to 18 inches tall in June and early July. A late August to early September application has been known to work as well. Do not apply control chemicals if we are in a drought situation as they seem to not work as well. Application rates of at least 15 gallons of water along with a good surfactant should get good chemical contact to the live growing plant.

As always please read and follow the label of the chemical choice and be safe.

For more information on pasture plant identification, please contact your local MU Extension Agronomy Field Specialist.