

Lespedeza

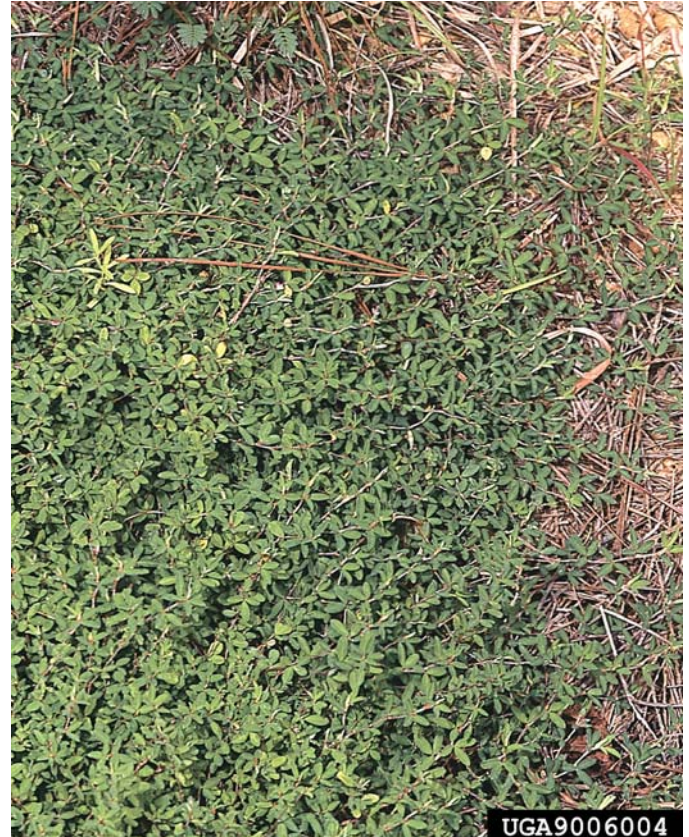
Description

Common lespedeza, also known as Japanese clover, (*Kummerowia striata* syn. *Lespedeza striata*) is a very common summer weed that can easily choke out thin turf. It is often found in open woods and fields and frequently in disturbed areas and turf.

Lespedeza is a mat-forming, wiry stemmed, prostrate, freely branched summer annual. It has dark green trifoliate (arranged in threes) leaves with three oblong, smooth leaflets. Leaflets have parallel veins nearly at right angles to a prominent mid-vein. Its leaves have smooth edges and a short spur at the tip of each leaflet. Lespedeza has a semi-woody taproot and grows close to the ground, making it difficult to cut with a mower. It flowers in late summer with pink to purple, single flowers found in leaf axils on most of the nodes of the main stems.



Common lespedeza leaf and flower
Photo courtesy of: Rebekah D. Wallace, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



Common lespedeza prostrate growth habit
Photo courtesy of: Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society, Bugwood.org

Cultural Control

Common lespedeza grows well in thin turf and dry, compacted areas. To discourage lespedeza's growth, it is recommended to increase the mowing height and to keep the soil's pH and fertility at correct levels for your turf. For more information on growing healthy turfgrass, see [HGIC 1201, Fertilizing Lawns](#); [HGIC 1205, Mowing Lawns](#); and [HGIC 1207, Watering Lawns](#).

Hand pulling is an option, especially in landscape beds where herbicides pose a possible threat to desirable plants.

Chemical Control

In Lawns: Cultural controls should first be implemented before applying herbicides for lespedeza control. However, if after taking steps to modify lawn care techniques, chemical control may still be necessary to further reduce the lespedeza population. Herbicides should be carefully chosen according to turf species and all label instructions followed.

A three-way herbicide can be used on bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, centipedegrass, St. Augustinegrass and tall fescue. The active ingredients of a three-way herbicide often include the following broadleaf weed killers: 2,4-D, dicamba, and mecoprop (MCPP). Examples of three-way herbicides are Ferti-lome Weed-Out Lawn Weed Killer with Trimec[®], Bayer Advanced Southern Weed Killer for Lawns, Spectracide Weed Stop Weed Killer for Lawns, Southern Ag Lawn Weed Killer with Trimec[®], and Lilly Miller Lawn Weed Killer Concentrate. Note: Herbicides containing 2,4-D should be applied at a reduced rate on St. Augustinegrass and centipedegrass to prevent damage to these lawns. If a second application is needed, apply the herbicide in spot treatments. Repeated applications of a three-way herbicide should be spaced according to label directions.

In addition to three-way herbicides there are several other herbicides that can be used for lespedeza control in home lawns. Atrazine (such as in Southern Ag Atrazine St. Augustine Weed Killer, Hi Yield Atrazine Weed Killer, Image for St. Augustinegrass & Centipedegrass with Atrazine, and Spectracide Weed Stop for Lawns Concentrate for St. Augustine & Centipede Lawns) may be used to control lespedeza in centipedegrass and St. Augustinegrass.

Metsulfuron (such as in Manor and Blade) can be used for lespedeza control in bermudagrass, centipedegrass, St. Augustinegrass, and zoysiagrass. Metsulfuron is packaged for landscape professionals. Due to the cost and application rate of this selective herbicide it may be more practical to hire a landscape professional for weed treatment. A non-ionic surfactant (such as Southern Ag Surfactant for Herbicides) is required at 2 teaspoons per gallon of spray mix for best control. Do not apply metsulfuron to lawn if over-seeded with

annual ryegrass or over-seed for 8 weeks after application. Do not plant woody ornamentals in treated areas for one year after application of metsulfuron. Do not apply metsulfuron herbicides within two times the width of the drip line of desirable hardwood trees.

Note: Read and follow all label instructions when using herbicides. Repeat applications 10 to 14 days apart may be required for acceptable control. Do not mow within 48 hours after application of most herbicides. Most postemergence herbicides need to dry on the leaf surface before irrigation or rainfall occurs.

CAUTION: Herbicides should not be applied during spring transition (green-up of lawn) or when air temperatures exceed 90 °F as this can cause severe damage to the turfgrass. A newly seeded lawn should be mowed a minimum of three times before applying an herbicide.

Turf Tolerance to Herbicides for Lespedeza Control

Herbicide	Bermudagrass	Centipedegrass	St. Augustinegrass	Tall Fescue	Zoysiagrass
atrazine	D	S	S	NR	NR
(3- way) 2,4-D + MCPP + dicamba	S	I	I	S	S
metsulfuron	S	S	S-I	NR	S
S = Safe at labeled rates I = Intermediate safety, use at reduced rates NR = Not registered for use on and/or damages this turfgrass D = Fully dormant turf only					

In Landscapes: If lespedeza is a problem in landscape beds, glyphosate can be used for spot treatments around ornamental plants. Examples of glyphosate products are Roundup Original, Eraser Systemic Weed & Grass Killer, Quick Kill Grass & Weed Killer, Bonide Kleenup Grass & Weed Killer, Hi-Yield Super Concentrate Killzall Weed & Grass, Maxide Super Concentrate 41% Weed & Grass Killer and Southern States Grass & Weed Killer Concentrate.

Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide that should be used with caution. Do not allow glyphosate spray mist to contact ornamental foliage or stems as severe injury will occur. A cardboard shield may be used to prevent glyphosate spray from drifting to nearby ornamentals.

Prepared by Morgan E. Judy, Extension Agent, Orangeburg County, Clemson University. (New 05/09. Pesticides updated 09/10.)

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