

# Ruins Fields, Pastures, Parks, and Wildlife Habitat

## The Culprit: *Sericea Lespedeza* (*Lespedeza cuneata*)



*Sericea lespedeza* quickly overtakes a site and reduces food and habitat for wildlife.

*Sericea lespedeza* was first used in the North Carolina as a forage crop. It was later promoted as food and cover for bobwhite quail.

**Now we know =>**

Bobwhite quail will eat the seeds of *sericea*, but it provides poor nutrition because they cannot fully digest the seed. Other animals avoid eating it.

### Why It's a Problem

- Displaces desirable native plants that support wildlife
- Changes the soil chemistry
- Can live many years and produces up to 1,500 seeds
- Unpalatable to most wildlife



## What Does It Look Like?



Three leaflets make up sericea's compound leaf. Leaflets are long and wedge shaped (widest at the tip). Silky hairs on the undersides have a silver color.



Young plants are a single stem. As they get older, they grow upright with branched stems. Plants are three to five feet tall and form dense stands.



Sericea lespedeza produces small white flowers beginning in mid-July through October. The flowers have two violet veins and the flower shape is like other plants in the pea family. Tiny seeds are released from small brown pods after winter's frost.



Sericea is common in the Virginia Piedmont and Coastal Plain and grows along roadsides, in vacant lots, pastures, hayfields, meadows, pine plantations, and even in moderately shaded areas under trees or in open areas of forests.

## How Do I Control It?

- Sericea is difficult to hand pull because of its deep taproot.
- Repeated mowing can be effective.
- Foliar herbicide treatment is best suited for the summer months before the plants flower.



Foliar spray individual plants with herbicide. Hold the spray wand above each stem and spray from top to bottom to avoid damage to nearby native plants.

## Additional Information

### Blue Ridge PRISM

-- [Sericea Lespedeza Fact Sheet](#)

-- [Resources on Invasive Plants](#)



## Photo Credits

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