

'Lancer' Perennial Pea

'Lancer' Perennial Pea (*Lathyrus latifolius* L.) is an attractive nitrogen-fixing legume. It is compatible with other legumes and grasses and is well suited for use in seed mixtures to establish cover in critically eroding areas. 'Lancer' can be planted along roadsides for beautification, providing cover and food for wildlife. It is a deep-rooted legume from Europe, where it is used as an ornamental around homes and farmsteads.

'Lancer' was released in June, 1984 by the USDA and the Michigan Department of Transportation.



Description

'Lancer' has compound leaves with two lanceolate leaflets that are 1.5 to 3.5 inches long. The long, broadly winged stems have tendrils that give it climbing ability. The green stems and foliage form a thick vine mat that measures 2 to 3 feet high. The plants bloom continuously for 6 weeks during the summer.

The flowers range from white to deep purple and are borne on racemes of up to 10 blossoms each. The seeds are large and are produced in pods that are 2.5 to 3.5 inches long.

Compared to other varieties of perennial pea, 'Lancer' grows more upright, has superior seedling vigor, and is a good seed producer. It also has a more uniform distribution of colors than other perennial peas evaluated. Although downy mildew has been observed on the leaves, 'Lancer' is not susceptible to any serious diseases or insect problems.

Establishment

'Lancer' should be established as part of a seed mixture that includes perennial grasses, other legumes, or both. Other components of the mixture may be the principal soil-stabilizing plants, and 'Lancer' can be included to provide color, or it can be one of the principal cover plants. If included in the mixture to provide color only, the recommended seeding rate of 'Lancer' is 10 pounds per acre; otherwise it is 15 pounds per acre. Do not seed alone because 'Lancer' will not provide soil cover quickly.



'Lancer' can be direct seeded with standard planting techniques. If the seed is drilled, it should be placed in a firm seedbed that is 0.5 to 1 inch deep. The planting site should be rolled or cultivated before and after seeding. If the site is unsuitable for equipment use, the seed can be applied with special hydro seeding equipment or broadcast and raked in the soil by hand. All plantings should be mulched with 1.5 to 2 tons of straw per acre.

'Lancer' can be planted in early spring or in the fall before September 15th. Fertilizer and lime should be applied according to needs determined by a soil test. The fertility requirement for 'Lancer' is similar to those for other legumes, such as alfalfa. Seed should be inoculated with the proper nitrogen-fixing bacteria just before planting.

Careful timing is necessary to obtain maximum yields when harvesting seed, because the seed pods shatter when fully ripe. Seed yields average 165 pounds per acre, with about 8000 seeds per pound.



Adaptation

Field plantings have shown that 'Lancer' is adapted to the Great Lakes region and the Northeastern United States. It is also likely that adaptation extends to Virginia, Missouri and Kansas. 'Lancer' grows well in silt loam to fine sand soils that have fair to good drainage. It is not suited to wet soils and is difficult to establish in sands.



Availability

The Nature Resources Conservation Service maintains G1, equivalent to foundation seed, at the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center.

For information on where to purchase 'Lancer' perennial pea and details on how and where to plant it, contact your local NRCS Service Center.

For More Information

Visit the NRCS Plant Materials Program website to learn more about using plants to address conservation problems.

<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

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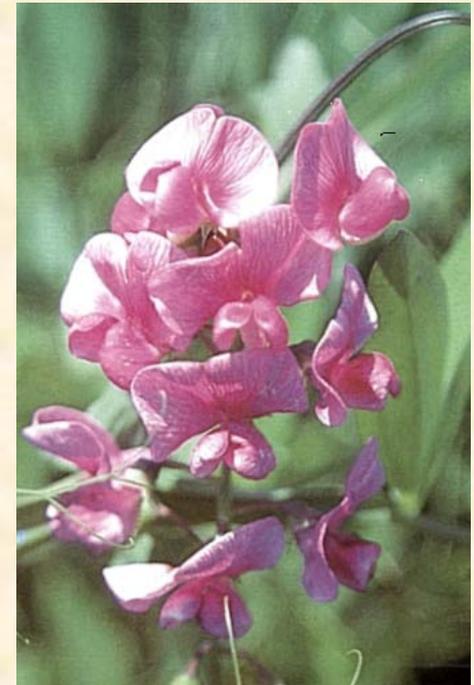
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