

CANADA MILKVETCH (*Astragalus canadensis*)

PLANTING GUIDE

Canada milkvetch is a native legume that is widely distributed across all but the extreme southeastern and southwestern United States. Plants are found naturally in moist prairies, open woodlands, roadsides, thickets, and streambanks. Plants tend to colonize in these areas.

ORIGIN

9069117 Canada milkvetch originates from Lonetree Wildlife Management Area, Sheridan County, North Dakota.

PLANT DESCRIPTION

It is a perennial legume with underground rhizomes. Plants of this species may be large and robust once established. Plant height ranges from 12 to 40 inches. The leaves are odd-pinnately compound. Leaflets are medium green and are 1 to 4 cm long and 5 to 15 mm wide. Generally, they are smooth or slightly hairy on the upper surface with stiff, short hairs on the underside.

The flowers are creamy, greenish white and about 1/2 to 3/4 inch long in a dense spike-like head. Flowering occurs from May to August. The pods contain several seeds that are small, smooth, and brownish yellow-green.

(actual seed size)

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

Evaluate this accession/species as a native legume for erosion control, forage quality, wetland restoration/enhancement, and wildlife habitat benefits.

PLANTING RECOMMENDATIONS

Site: Canada milkvetch prefers moist sites. It is adapted to a wide range of soil types and conditions. However, it is NOT recommended for dry uplands.

Rate of Seeding: Planting Canada milkvetch as part of a native grass/forb mix (preferably as a sculptured seeding on an adapted site) is recommended. The number of seeds/lb varies but averages 266,000 to 275,000 seeds/lb. Planting 1/10 to 1/4 PLS lb/ac as part of a mix should produce adequate densities. When higher densities are desired, such as along streambank corridors, 1 to 2 PLS lb/ac is recommended.

Date of Seeding: Spring seeding prior to May 15; dormant seeding after October 20. Seed should be mechanically scarified to break down dormancy due to hard seed coat. It is also desirable to inoculate seed with species specific rhizobium for nitrogen fixing.

PLANTING METHOD

Plant seed shallow at a depth of 1/2 to 3/4 inches into a firm seedbed. First preference would be to use the legume box of a grass seed drill for the Canada milkvetch seed. Low rates of seed may need to be mixed with filler material for better seed distribution. The second method of choice would be to mix the Canada milkvetch seed with the other native species in one of the other seed boxes. If seed settles to the bottom of the box, it should be added in frequent intervals rather than all at once. If conditions do not permit the use of a drill, double the seeding rate, broadcast the seed, and cover lightly by harrowing.

MANAGEMENT

Longevity of Canada milkvetch is short, generally 3 to 4 years. Persistence may be enhanced by mowing or grazing to prevent seed formation. Plants may also be improved by phosphorous or potassium fertilizer. The plant is palatable to livestock and deer and is highly nutritious at certain times of the growing season.

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