

Early spring plantings, April 15 to May 15, or late summer ones, August 15 to September 15, will yield the best results. If 'Lathco' is incorporated into the soil, a seeding rate of 20 pounds per acre is recommended.

For stand establishment and the development of cover, lime and fertilizer are helpful. Lime is essential if the pH is below 5.0, and it is recommended on all sites with a pH below 6.0. In general, 2 tons of agricultural lime and 300 to 400 pounds of 10-20-20 fertilizer or equivalent should be applied before seeding. Where site conditions allow, the lime and fertilizer should be worked into the soil surface.

### Seed Production

'Lathco' flatpea generally produces a good seed crop. The pods ripen unevenly; therefore, harvesting is difficult. A certain portion of the seed crop will be lost because of the shattering of early maturing pods and the immaturity of late maturing pods. The average seed production at the Big Flats Plant Materials Center for a 10 year period was about 300 pounds of clean seed per acre.

In the Northeast, 'Lathco' flatpea usually produces better seed yields on coarse textured or shallow soils that are excessively well drained and tend to be droughty. When it is grown on deeper, fertile soils, vigorous vegetative growth often shades the flowers, reduces seed set, and makes harvesting more difficult.

### Availability

For names of commercial nurseries that sell 'Lathco' or for more information on the availability, planting and use of 'Lathco,' contact your local NRCS office or Soil and Water Conservation District office.

### For More Information

Visit our Plant Materials Internet site at <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov> to find more information on solving conservation problems using plants.

USDA NRCS  
Big Flats Plant Materials Center  
RD #1, Box 360A, Rt. 352  
Corning, NY 14830  
phone: (607) 562-8404  
fax: (607) 562-8516

---

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio-tape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (Voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326 W. Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250 or call 202-720-5964 (Voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

March 1999



## 'Lathco' flatpea



An improved  
conservation  
plant developed by  
the Big Flats Plant  
Materials Center,  
Corning, NY



## 'Lathco' flatpea

'Lathco' flatpea (*Lathyrus sylvestris*) is a long-lived perennial legume. 'Lathco' is excellent for stabilizing disturbed and bare areas, controlling erosion and reducing water runoff. It provides effective cover on roadbanks, dams, borrow area, gravel pits, logging roads, and mine spoil.

'Lathco' can also be used for suppressing the invasion of woody plants. This characteristic makes it a valuable plant to use on roadbanks, logging roads, and utility rights-of-way, where it is desirable to retain open areas for wildlife, aesthetic considerations, or access to utilities. Flatpea is used for food and cover by some species of wildlife. We do not recommend this plant for forage.

The cultivar was released by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in cooperation with the Cornell Agricultural Experiment Station and Pennsylvania Agricultural Experiment Station.



### Description

'Lathco' flatpea is a viny, deep-rooted, perennial legume with tendril-bearing stems. It normally forms a dense mat, 2 to 3 feet high. The herbaceous stems can grow 3 to 6 feet in height and die back to the ground each year. Its leaves are about 3 inches long. Small, rose-colored flowers appear during

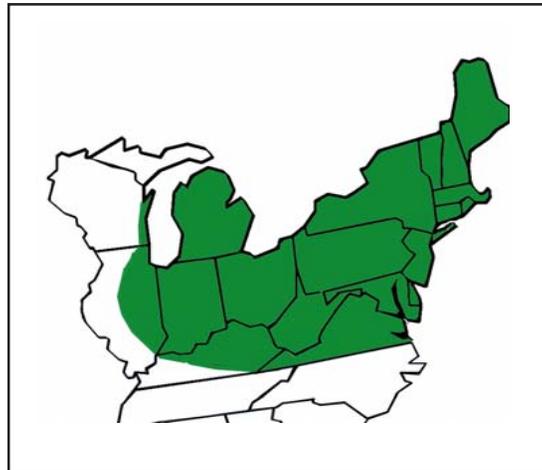
June and July. Seeds are round or slightly flattened, almost 1/8 inch in diameter, with 10,000 to 12,000 seeds per pound. The seed coat is impervious to water, and some seeds will lie in the ground for months before germinating. No particular disease or insect problems have been noted in the Northeast.

### Adaptation

'Lathco' flatpea is hardy, drought tolerant, and adaptive to a wide variety of soils, including low-fertility sands, gravels and shales. It is best suited to well-drained soils, but it will grow on soils that are moderately well drained. 'Lathco' flatpea is not adapted to poorly drained soils. It is slightly more acid tolerant than birdsfoot trefoil, tolerating a pH of 5.0 or higher.

This legume was introduced into the United States from central Europe and has become naturalized across northern portions of the country. Flatpea is adapted throughout the Northeast and upper Midwest from Maine to Michigan, Kentucky, and West Virginia (north of latitude 36°). In the southern part of the region, it is probably better adapted to areas of higher elevation than sericea lespedeza.

### Area of Adaptation for 'Lathco'



'Lathco' flatpea can be broadcast or hydroseeded on steep slopes or rough sites where drilling is not possible. This seed must be incorporated into the soil for successful establishment. A relatively high seeding rate is needed to obtain satisfactory stands on steep slopes. Seed must be implanted with specific bacterial culture inoculum for the *Lathyrus* species. If hydroseeded, four times the standard inoculum rate specified is recommended.

On steep slopes or rough sites, mulch should be applied and anchored to provide suitable conditions for seedling establishment. Broadcast seeding should be tracked by a bulldozer. A heavy straw mulch should be applied at a minimum of 2 tons per acre, especially where the seed cannot be incorporated into the soil. If the site is accessible to farm equipment, the seed can be drilled or band-seeded at a depth of 1 to 1½ inches. Seed should be planted on a firm, clean, well-prepared seed bed.

'Lathco' flatpea stands are slow to develop. The plants will spread and become a solid stand by the end of the second season, but some grass always should be included to provide initial cover. A rate of 15 to 20 pounds of tall fescue per acre of flatpea is recommended; however, a rate of 30 to 40 pounds per acre of flatpea with 5 to 10 pounds of ryegrass is recommended for disturbed sites.