**Cowpea (Vigna unguiculata)** is a warm-season annual legume. Cowpeas can be a good grazing source and nitrogen fixer that grows quickly.

### Identifying Features
- Trifoliate compound leaf
- Hollow, hairless stem
- Hairless, smooth leaves
- Small bract on center petiolule
- Glossy cuticle on leaves

### Cultural Traits
- Warm-season annual legume
- Minimum germination soil temperature: 58°F
- Cold temperature tolerance: 32°F
- Seeding date: Mid May to Early August*

### Planting Information*
- **Drill** at 1 - 1½ inch (30 lbs./acre PLS**)
- **Broadcast** (38 lbs./acre PLS)
- **Aerial** (not recommended)

### Additional planting information:
- ~4,000 seeds/lb.
- Increase seeding rate if using for forage/grazing.
- If growing for nitrogen production, consider using inoculation.
- Planting in a mixture can enhance performance as a cover crop.

### C:N (Carbon:Nitrogen) Ratio
- **Cowpea**: 18:1 to 22:1

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*Planting information from Midwest Cover Crop Council (midwestcovercrops.org). Refer to local NRCS office recommendations (Iowa Field Office Technical Guide, Section 4, 340 Cover Crop) for seeding dates and rates pertinent to location specific financial assistance program requirements. **Pure Live Seed*
Performance
Dry matter = 2,500 - 4,500 lbs./acre per year
(Biomass quantity is dependent on planting and
termination dates and precipitation.)

Performance Ratings
» Cash crop interseed (early vegetative)  Good
» Cash crop overseed (late seed fill)   N/A
» Grazing quality                      Very good
» Mechanical forage harvest           Good
» Nitrogen fixer                       Very good
» Nitrogen scavenger                  Good
» Weed suppression                    Fair
» Compaction fighter                  Very good
» Erosion control                     Good
» Lasting residue                     Fair
» Quick grower                        Very good
» Drought tolerance                   Very good
» Low fertility tolerance             Good
» Shade tolerance                     Fair

Additional Considerations
» For full nitrogen fixation potential, plant cowpeas
  early in the season.
» Fixed nitrogen is not available during active growth.
» Cowpeas can compete with the cash crop if
  interseeded.
» When interseeded with corn, cowpea has a tendency
  to climb and can impede corn harvest.
» As cowpea mature they become stemmy, reducing
  grazing preference.