GREENLEAF DESMODIUM

Begger Lice, Kuru Vine

Desmodium intortum Fabaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Origin

The origin of this species of Desmodium is not clear but from its growing preferences it must have been from a moist, humid area with rainfall no less than 120 cm/year. It is now a familiar forage legume in Indo-China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Central and South America at low elevations.

Uses

This perennial, legume plant can be heavily grazed by livestock in frost-free areas with good rainfall. It favors rainfall above 875 mm/year and can even tolerate temporary flooding. It performs well in the early spring, continues over a long growing season, co-exists with grasses and produces foliage rich in nitrogen.

Cultivation

Because of the small size of its seed, a well-prepared seedbed and a shallow planting depth of 1 cm is necessary. It does not compete well with more vigorous grasses nor can it survive heavy grazing until its long taproot and stolons have become well established. When adequately fertilized with phosphorus, potassium, molybdenum and zinc it can be depended upon to fix over 300 kg nitrogen/ha/year.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Cutting the foliage at 12-week intervals to a height of no less than 4 cm can result in a seasonal yield of 19 tonnes/ha/year of green material. Greenleaf Desmodium makes good hay, silage and ground meal for cattle feed. Because of its trailing habit, it is difficult to harvest by machine for seed. The crop should be left in swaths for 10-14 days for the unripe seeds to mature. Seed yield can total 80-100 kg/ha. Seeds are spread easily because they stick to animals and clothing (“beggar lice.”)

Pests and Diseases

D. intortum resists the disease of legume little-leaf except under very wet conditions. Meloid beetles eat the flowers and amnemus weevils are sometimes found to eat leaves

Cooking and Nutrition

Chickens particularly benefit from *D. intortum* meal, as it is a good source of protein, riboflavin and vitamin A. The foliage supplies grazing animals with crude protein of up to 18%. This crop is not for human consumption.

References

Heuzé V., Tran G., Hassoun P., 2017. *Greenleaf desmodium (Desmodium intortum)*. Feedipedia, a programme by INRA, CIRAD, AFZ and FAO. https://www.feedipedia.org/node/303 *Last updated on December 15, 2017, 17:32*

http://www.tropicalforages.info/key/forages/Media/Html/entities/desmodium_intortum.htm

http://ecocrop.fao.org/ecocrop/srv/en/cropView?id=894

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