

AMERICAN JOINT VETCH

Deer Vetch, shyleaf

Aeschynomene americana

Fabaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Aeschynomene americana is an annual legume forage crop and green manure cover crop. Considered a “subshrub,” *A. americana* can reach heights of 1-2 m. Pinnately compound leaves are finely textured, with 25-60 leaflets per leaf. Borne on pubescent stems, leaves reach 7.5 cm in length. Flowers appear in clusters and can range in color from yellow-orange, to yellow with contrasting lines, or even pink. Slightly curved pods are segmented. When ripe, these segments break off, with each segment containing a seed.

Uses

A. americana is a common grazing forage crop in immature stages. In mature stages, it serves as a fodder source for cut-and-carry. In either stage, *A. americana* preserves well as a nutritious hay source. As a green manure cover crop legume, *A. americana* fixes atmospheric nitrogen and builds soil fertility. Due to its subshrub growth habit, *A. americana* can also serve as crucial habitat for myriad insect and wildlife species.

Common Names

- French
 - american joint vetch
- Spanish
 - Pega Pega
 - antejuela
 - dormilonga
 - hierba Rosario

Cultivation

- **Elevation** – up to 2800 m
- **Rainfall** – 600-4000 mm
- **Soil Types** – pH 4-8; can tolerate poorly drained soils
- **Temperature Range** – 7-35°C
- **Day Length Sensitivity** – requires day lengths less than 12 hours to flower
- **Light** – prefers full sun

Sowing depth should be 1-2 cm, at rates of 2-3 kg/ha for dehulled seed or 4-6 kg/ha for seed pod segments. (Higher rates of sowing would allow for faster establishment of pasture.) Plants should be established before heavy rainfall inundation. After establishment, *A. americana* tolerates waterlogging and flooded conditions well. Sowing of *A. americana* can be done in association with other forage crop species.

Harvesting and Seed Production

If grown as a grazing pasture crop, early grazing encourages dense, low growth. *A. americana* is relatively tolerant of heavy grazing, but should be rotationally managed, with ample recovery periods. As a cut-and-carry crop, *A. americana* should be allowed to reach full height, with conservative pruning as it grows, to encourage canopy density and subsidize livestock feed needs. At maturity, harvest can be done continually or terminally for hay production. When grown as a green manure cover crop, aboveground biomass should be cut at ground level and returned to the soil at the end of the growing season.

Pests and Diseases

Nematodes can be pestilent for *A. americana*.

Cooking and Nutrition

Not for human consumption.

References

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