

DESMANTHUS

Hedge Lucerne, False Tamarind, Donkey Bean, Bundle Flower, Dwarf Koa, Wild Tantan

Desmanthus virgatus

Fabaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Desmanthus is a perennial, nitrogen-fixing tropical shrub that can be used as a green manure/cover crop and as fodder for livestock. This shrub is adaptable to a range of environments and is tolerant of drought.

Origin

Native to the American tropics and subtropics.

Uses

Desmanthus is a legume that can be used as a green manure/cover crop and as fodder for livestock. It grows to 2-3 meters high without clipping and grows back quickly after cutting or livestock browsing. It can also be used as a living fence or in alley cropping. It tolerates drought and can be invasive at low levels of rainfall. The leaves do not contain the toxins (mimosine) found in other legumes such as *Leucaena*.

Common Names

- Spanish
 - Guajillo
 - guajito
 - guashillo

Cultivation

Plant seeds in furrows at the end of the dry season. Seeds should be planted 1 cm deep, at a rate of 8-20 kg/ha (depending on furrow distance). Seed can be treated with sulfuric acid for 8 minutes to break dormancy.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The first cutting should be 90-120 days after sowing. Wait 35-45 days in the rainy season before cutting again, and 45-60 days in the dry season. The optimum height for cutting is 50 cm, at intervals of 45 days. Consistent cutting will produce a broad root crown. Stems are softer than *Leucaena* and easier to cut. Feed to livestock at 0.8 to 1% of body weight or 20-22% of dry matter ration.

References

USDA, Agricultural Research Service, National Plant Germplasm System. 2019. Germplasm Resources Information Network (GRIN-Taxonomy). National Germplasm Resources Laboratory, Beltsville, Maryland. URL: <https://npgsweb.ars-grin.gov/gringlobal/taxonomydetail.aspx?id=300178>. Accessed 15 May 2019.

Heuzé V., Tran G., Sauvant D., Bastianelli D., 2017. *Dwarf koa (Desmanthus virgatus)*. Feedipedia, a programme by INRA, CIRAD, AFZ and FAO. <https://www.feedipedia.org/node/307> Last updated on December 15, 2017, 17:28

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

<http://ecocrop.fao.org/ecocrop/srv/en/cropView?id=5258>