

HAIRY INDIGO

Indigofera hirsuta

Fabaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Hairy Indigo, a leguminous plant, is native to tropical Africa, southern Asia and northern Australia. Hairy Indigo is an erect-growing, reseeding, summer annual legume that may grow 1-2 m (4-7 ft) tall if not grazed. It produces heavy foliage on fine stems that become coarse in latter stages of development and requires little care or capital input with a relatively high return in forage. Stems and leaves are covered with short, bristlelike hairs.

Uses

Hairy Indigo yields quality forage that is used for hay, grazing and green chop. It is reported to contain 23.8% crude protein, 15.2% crude fiber, 1.88% calcium and 0.37 % phosphorus. When used as a cover crop or green manure crop, Hairy Indigo can effectively suppress nematodes that might otherwise seriously damage succeeding crops.

Cultivation

- Elevation: 0-1350 m (4500 ft)
- Rainfall: 900-1700 mm (35-67 in)
- Temperature: frost sensitive
- Soil: tolerates poor sandy soils of low pH and fertility, and thus can be useful for soil improvement.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Hairy Indigo is used for hay and silage production but the hay must be made early in the season as the stems become coarse and woody with age. Studies at the University of Florida showed that Hairy Indigo can produce up to 12 tons of dry matter per acre that would contain about 20% crude protein and 50-60% digestibility. The remainder from such an early cut can then be grazed or used as green manure. Hairy Indigo is a good seed producer but it is somewhat difficult to harvest the seed because the plant dries slowly after the seed matures. It is recommended that mowing and drying in windrows be used before threshing. It should be noted that Hairy Indigo is a free seeding annual and naturalizes readily in suitable habitats.

Pests and Diseases

Hairy Indigo is resistant to root knot nematode (*Meloidogyne.spp*) and most insects and diseases.

References

Heuzé V., Tran G., Hassoun P., Lebas F., 2017. *Hairy indigo (Indigofera hirsuta)*. Feedipedia, a programme by INRA, CIRAD, AFZ and FAO. <https://www.feedipedia.org/node/289> Last updated on May 24, 2017, 17:09

<http://ecocrop.fao.org/ecocrop/srv/en/cropView?id=2526>