



# Invasive Species Leaflet



Excerpted with permission from "Invasive Exotic Plants of North Carolina"  
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## *Lespedeza bicolor* (Shrub Lespedeza, Bicolor Lespedeza)

### Initial Introduction and Expansion in Range



Introduced to the United States in the late 1800s from Japan, *Lespedeza bicolor* now occurs throughout most of the Southeast from Arkansas to Maryland, and south to Florida and Texas. It can be found statewide in North Carolina. It was introduced primarily to provide food and cover for bobwhite quail and other popular, upland, game birds. Additional uses include erosion control, stabilization along stream banks and steep slopes, and landscaping for borders and hedges. The ability of this plant to fix nitrogen has also resulted in its use for re-vegetation of disturbed, infertile sites, particularly areas that have been burned. As with other species of *Lespedeza*, it responds positively to burning, enabling this plant to outcompete native plants on sites that have been disturbed by fire.

The seeds of *L. bicolor* are readily dispersed by birds, allowing it to escape cultivation and invade open areas where it can form dense thickets that displace native vegetation. It is less common than *L. cuneata* (Sericea, Korean, or Chinese lespedeza) which is still widely planted for erosion control and its alleged benefits for wildlife forage.

### Description and Biology

- Upright, loosely branched deciduous shrub, 4 to 10 feet in height with many slender branches.
- Leaves are compound in groups of three arranged alternately along the stem.
- Rosy-purple, pea-like flowers appear in the late summer.
- Small, black seeds singly produced in flat pods that open when mature. Seed maturity occurs from late September to early October.
- Widely branching, lateral root system.



## Habitats Susceptible to Invasion

Found primarily in the piedmont and coastal plain of North Carolina, *L. bicolor* thrives in fields, open woodlands, clearings, fence and hedge rows, and along roadsides. It can invade open forest canopies after disturbance and, as a result, can be a threat to natural areas. It does well on droughty and dry to medium well-drained soils in full sun to partial shade but cannot tolerate poorly drained sites.

## Prevention and Control

*Lespedeza bicolor* can be successfully controlled from July to September with a foliar solution of 2 quarts triclopyr plus 6 ounces clopyralid per acre and a 0.5 percent nonionic surfactant before the plant sets seed. For large stands of *L. bicolor*, it may be advantageous to mow one to three months prior to the herbicide application to reduce the amount of biomass that must be treated.

***THE LABEL IS THE LAW!***

***WHEN USING ANY PESTICIDE, FOLLOW ALL LABEL INSTRUCTIONS***

### Citations:

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