GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION OF JAPAN CLOVER IN OHIO

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INTRODUCTION

Japan clover (Lespedeza striata), a native of eastern Asia, was introduced into the southeastern part of the United States just previous to 1850 (4). About the time of the Civil War it became fairly well scattered by various means.

At the present time it is growing all over southeastern United States from central New Jersey to central Kansas and from there south to the Gulf of Mexico. Being an annual, its distribution is limited by its ability to produce seed and this, in turn, is apparently limited by the climate or length of growing season. Failures of Japan clover to perpetuate itself are reported from Michigan (13), Iowa (14), and northern Ohio.

Japan clover has a spreading habit of growth where the stand is thin or where soil is low in fertility, but in thick stands it grows more erect. Its small purple flower, not appearing until September in Ohio, prevents confusion of the plant with hop clover and yellow trefoil.

In Ohio it grows from 5 to 10 inches high, depending on soil fertility and weather conditions. Seed is produced plentifully where the season is long enough.

Japan clover is reported (1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16) to be growing on a great variety of soils but does not seem able to grow in pure sand. It grows better where well supplied with water, but is able to continue growth during exceedingly dry, summer weather.

Japan clover cross inoculates with a large group of legumes, including cowpeas, partridge pea, tick trefoil, and peanut. Consequently, artificial inoculation does not usually seem to be necessary.

Growth large enough for hay crops is produced only in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and western Tennessee. Wherever it grows it furnishes very desirable pasture for which use it serves its best purpose.

Feeding tests by Henry and Morrison (8) proved it to be fully equal to red clover and nearly as valuable as alfalfa for cattle and horses.

Its value as a soil improver varies with the amount of growth it makes, but its ability to add some nitrogen and organic matter to...