Registration of ‘AU EarlyCover’ Hairy Vetch

‘AU EarlyCover’ (Reg. no. CV-8, PI 575701), a soft-grained hairy vetch (Vicia villosa Roth), was jointly developed by Auburn University, Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and released in 1994. This cultivar, originally designated Synthetic 3, was derived from accession 9053961 collected in Henry County, GA, in 1993. Thirty-three early blooming plants were initially selected from this accession and were used as the foundation for the early blooming and high vigor. Recurrent restricted phenotypic selection was used to improve the population. The earliest flowering date criterion during the three cycles of selection was used to improve the population. Additional traits considered during the selection process were vigor (plant size and overall health) and uniformity of morphology. AU EarlyCover was created by equal bulking of three lines selected after progeny testing.

After the cultivar was synthesized, extensive testing was conducted at sites throughout Alabama (Winfield, Belle Mina, Marion Junction, Monroeville, and Tallassee) and Georgia (Americus) in 1993. The three lines used to synthesize AU EarlyCover performed quite well in clipping trials at each of these sites in 1992 and 1993.

AU EarlyCover is an excellent cover crop because of its early blooming and early growth. When this cultivar is harvested or incorporated as a green manure on or around 1 April (above 80°F), many farmers of the Lower South are ready to plant corn. If dry matter yield is comparable or superior to common hairy vetch, AU EarlyCover can have 170 to 230 kg ha⁻¹ of dry matter yield on or near 1 April in Alabama and Georgia. AU EarlyCover would be a better choice when early grazing is desired.

In many cases, AU EarlyCover could be a better forage than hairy vetch. Hairy vetch is commonly used with small-grain crops as a legume companion intended to be cut for hay. AU EarlyCover will perform better in such situations because it has early maturity (and thus the optimum harvest date) better matches that of the small grains. If hairy vetch is to be used for pasture, AU EarlyCover would be a better choice.

AU EarlyCover flowers 23 to 36 d earlier than common hairy vetch. Crude protein content of AU EarlyCover (on a dry matter basis) on or near 1 April in Alabama and Georgia is 170 to 230 kg ha⁻¹. AU EarlyCover has longer leaflets than common hairy vetch, and hairy vetch has pubescent at the seedling stage whereas common hairy vetch has glabrous stems.

AU EarlyCover is well adapted to the central valleys of Alabama and Georgia. Foundation and Certified seed will be recognized. Breeder seed of AU EarlyCover is produced and maintained by Auburn University Agricultural Experiment Station, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Seed of AU EarlyCover is available in limited quantities for the 1995 autumn planting season.

References and Notes