

Kudzu

VINES



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***Pueraria montana* (Lour.) Merr. PUMOL**

Synonyms: *P. lobata* (Willd.) Ohwi, *P. montana* var. *lobata* (Willd.) Maesen & S. Almeida

Plant. Deciduous twining, trailing, mat-forming, ropelike woody leguminous vine, 35 to 100 feet (10 to 30 m) long with three-leaflet leaves. Large semiwoody tuberous roots reaching depths of 3 to 16 feet (1 to 5 m). Leaves and small vines dying with first frost and matted dead leaves persistent during winter.

Stem. Woody vines to 10 inches (25 cm) in diameter, round in cross section, with infrequent branching. Stems yellow green with dense erect golden hairs and upward matted silver hairs, aging to ropelike, light gray, and hairless. Frequent unswollen nodes that root when on the ground. Mature bark eventually rough, rigid, and usually dark brown.

Leaves. Alternate, pinnately compound three-leaflet leaves, each leaflet 3 to 7 inches (8 to 18 cm) long and 2.5 to 8 inches (6 to 20 cm) wide. Usually slightly lobed (unless in shade): a two-lobed symmetric middle leaflet and two one-lobed side leaflets, all petioles swollen near leaflets. Tips pointed. Margins thin membranous and fine golden hairy. Leafstalks 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 cm) long, long hairy, base swollen, with deciduous stipules.

Flowers. June to September. Axillary slender clusters (racemes), 2 to 12 inches (5 to 30 cm) long, of pealike flowers in pairs (or threes) from raised nodes spiraling up the stalk, opening from the base to top. Petals lavender to wine colored with yellow centers.

Fruit and seeds. September to January. Clustered dry, flattened legume pods (bulging above the seeds) each 1.2 to 3 inches (3 to 8 cm) long and 0.3 to 0.5 inch (8 to 12 mm) wide. Green ripening to tan with stiff golden-brown hairs. Splitting on one to two sides to release a few ovoid seeds.

Ecology. Occurs in old infestations, along right-of-ways and stream banks. Forms dense mats over the ground, debris, shrubs, and mature trees forming dense patches by twining on objects less than 4 inches (10 cm) in diameter. Colonizes by vines rooting at nodes and spreads by wind-, animal-, and water-dispersed seeds. Seed viability variable. Leguminous nitrogen fixer.

History and use. Introduced from Japan and China in early 1900s with continued seed importation. Erosion control, livestock feed, and folk art.

States with suspected infestations are shown in gray.

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