

Shrubby Lespedeza



***Lespedeza bicolor* Turcz. LEBI2**

Synonyms: bicolor lespedeza, bicolor, shrub bushclover

Plant. Perennial much branched, leguminous forb or ascending shrub, 3 to 10 feet (1 to 3 m) in height with three-leaflet leaves, many small purple-to-white pea flowers, and single-seeded pods from a woody rootcrown. Dormant brown plants remain upright most of the winter.

Stem. Arching branched, upright-to-ascending stems, 0.2 to 0.8 inch (0.5 to 2 cm) in diameter. Often gray green. Appressed hairy to hairless.

Leaves. Alternate, three-leaflet leaves. Each leaflet elliptic to ovate with a hairlike tip, 0.8 to 2 inches (2 to 5 cm) long and 0.4 to 1.2 inches (1 to 3 cm) wide. Lower surface lighter green than upper surface. Petioles 0.8 to 1.6 inches (2 to 4 cm) long. Stipules narrowly linear, 0.04 to 0.3 inch (1 to 8 mm) long.

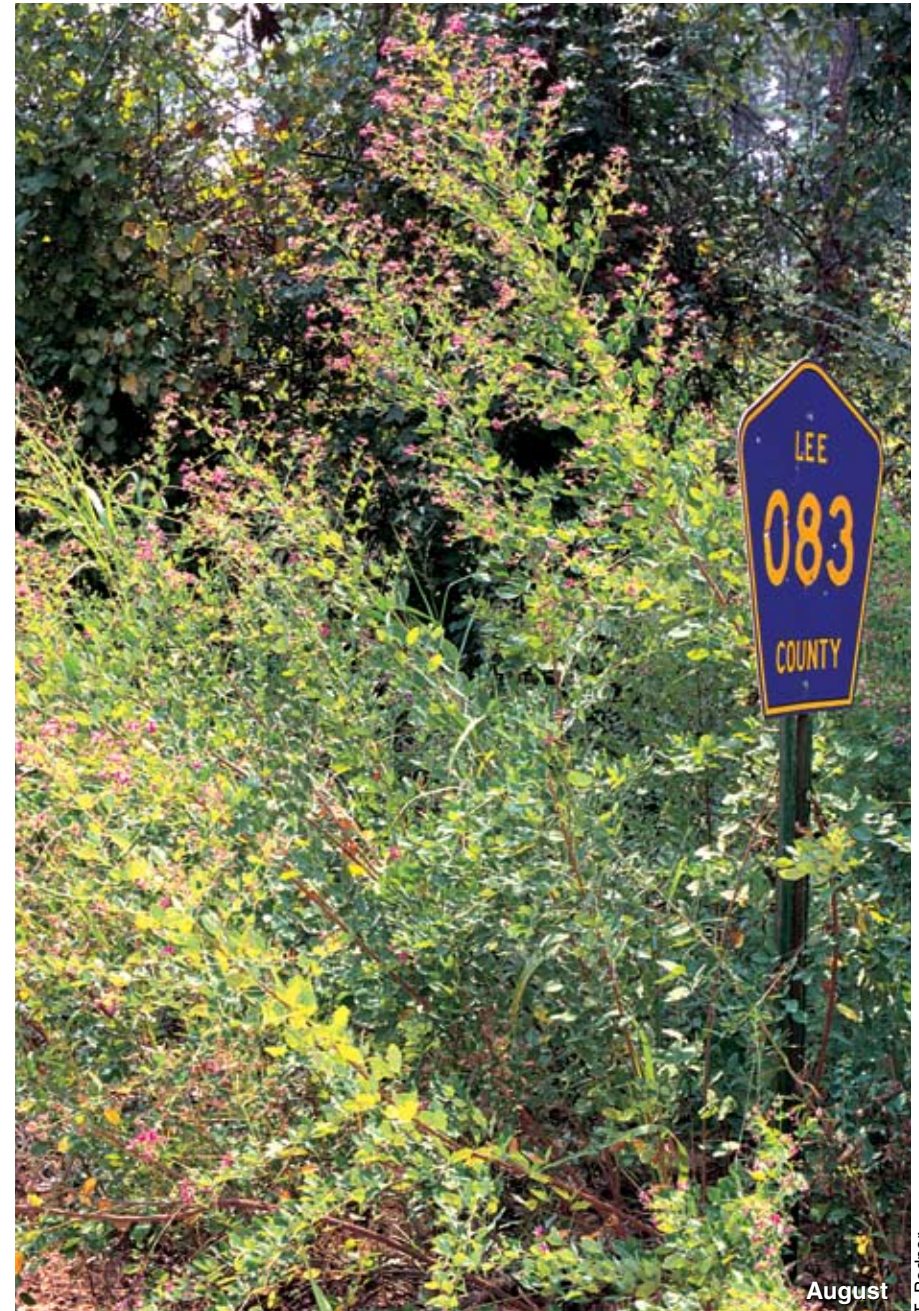
Flowers. June to September. Clusters (racemes) 4 to 6 inches (10 to 15 cm) long—each subtended by a tiny ovate bract—of 5 to 15 well-spaced, pealike flowers. Each flower 0.3 to 0.4 inch (8 to 11 mm) long, growing from upper leaf axils and beyond the upper leaves. Petals usually rosy purple in center and often grading to lighter shades, but can vary to white. Calyx (sepals) sparsely to very hairy with lobes 0.1 to 0.2 inch (2.5 to 4.5 mm) long.

Fruit and seeds. August to March. Flat legume pod 0.2 to 0.3 inch (6 to 8 mm) long, broadly elliptic with pointed hairlike tip. Green becoming gray and densely appressed hairy. Single black seed 0.12 to 0.16 inch (3 to 4 mm) long.

Ecology. Planted widely in forest openings for wildlife food plots and soil stabilization to later encroach into adjoining stands. Reproduces and spreads even under a medium-to-dense overstory. Spread encouraged by burning. Leguminous nitrogen fixer.

History and use. Introduced from Japan as an ornamental in the late 1800s. Later programs promoted use for wildlife food and soil stabilization and improvement. Still planted for quail food plots.

States with suspected infestations are shown in gray.

**Shrubby Lespedeza****6052**

August

T. Bodner