

# Alabama Planting Guide for Forage Legumes

One of the most important steps in producing forage crops, as with other crops, is the planting operation. It is essential to start with high-quality seed of a recommended variety. Also, if the wrong seeding rate is used, if the seed is planted at the wrong time, if it is planted at the wrong depth, etc., the chances of producing a good yield are reduced or eliminated. In fact, there are probably more possibilities for a producer to make yield-reducing errors during planting than at any other time—especially in the production of forage crops.

This planting guide has been developed to help producers in establishing most forage legumes commonly grown in Alabama. The fact that information is given for a particular species, however, should not necessarily be taken as a recommendation to grow that species. Some commonly grown forage species are not recommended by Auburn University. Also, some varieties of a given species may produce well while others do not. In summary, this guide offers information on how to have the best chance of establishing a forage legume species if the decision to plant it has been made.

## Five Steps to Higher Yields and More Profit:

- 1. Start with high-quality seed.**  
Plant certified seed of a recommended variety.  
Plant treated seed for protection against disease.  
Inoculate legume seed.
- 2. Get the most from your soil.**  
Test your soil to determine nutrient needs.  
Fertilize and lime your soil according to test results.
- 3. Plant for good stands.**  
Place seed at proper depth in good seedbed.  
Plant when soil temperature and moisture are best.  
Plant correct rate of seed per acre.
- 4. Manage for high yields.**  
Maintain soil fertility.  
Control weeds, insects, and diseases.
- 5. Harvest for high yields.**  
Harvest at the right time.  
Adjust equipment properly.  
Protect quality by proper handling and storage.



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**For more information**, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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## Seed Quality

Crop	Growth Habit; Uses <sup>1</sup>	Area <sup>2</sup>	Soils	Seeding Rate <sup>3</sup> (lb./A.); Depth	Planting Dates <sup>2</sup>	Germ. Percent (Min.)	Purity Percent (Min.)	Weed Seed Percent (Max.)	Inoculant Type <sup>4</sup>	Seed/Pound
<b>Alfalfa</b>	Warm-season perennial; a, f, g	N, C, S	Deep, fertile, well drained	B:20-25; 0-¼ in. deep	N: Aug.15–Oct.1 C:Sept.1–Oct.1 Oct.1–Nov.1	80	99	0.50	Alfalfa	225,000
<b>Birdsfoot Trefoil</b>	Warm-season perennial; a, f, g	N, C	Well drained, productive	Alone B:8-10, in mixtures B:4-5; 0-¼ in. deep	Sept.–Oct.	80	99	0.50	Trefoil	375,850
<b>Black Medic</b>	Cool-season annual; b, c, e	Black Belt	Lime soils	B:10; 0-¼ in. deep	Sept.–Oct.	80	95	0.30	Alfalfa	265,000
<b>Caley Peas</b>	Cool-season annual; a, c, e	Black Belt	All Black Belt soils; pH 6.5 or higher	B:50; ½-1 in. deep	Sept.–Oct. 15	80	95	0.20	Pea and Vetch	17,000
<b>Clover, Alyce</b>	Warm-season annual; a, c, f	S	Fertile, well drained	B:15-20; ¼-½ in. deep	May 15–July 15	85	98	0.25	Cowpea	300,000
<b>Clover, Arrowleaf</b>	Cool-season annual; a, c, e	N, C, S	Well drained, medium to highly fertile	B:5-8 (scarified seed); 0-½ in. deep	N:Aug.25–Oct.1 C:Sept.1–Oct.15 S:Sept.15–Nov.1 Overseeded: 3-5 weeks later	85	99	0.50	Arrowleaf	400,000
<b>Clover, Ball</b>	Cool-season annual; c, e	N, C, S	Sandy loam to clay; tolerates wet soils	B:3-5; 0-¼ in. deep	Sept.–Oct.	85	95	0.30	Clover	1,000,000
<b>Clover, Crimson</b>	Cool-season annual; c, e	N, C, S	Well drained; avoid lime soils	B:20-30; 0-½ in. deep	Same as for Arrowleaf clover	85	99	0.50	Clover	150,000
<b>Clover, Lappacea</b>	Cool-season annual; b, c, e	Black Belt	Heavy soils of Black Belt	B:10-15; 0-¼ in. deep	Sept.–Oct.	85	95	0.25	Clover	680,000
<b>Clover, Red</b>	Cool-season biennial; a, e	N, C, S	Fertile, well drained	D:8, B:15; ¼-½ in. deep	N, C, S:Sept.15–Nov.15 N, C:Feb.1–Apr.1	85	98	0.50	Clover	272,000
<b>Clover, Subterranean</b>	Cool-season annual; c, e	N, C, S	Well drained, productive	B:8-10	Sept.–Oct.	85	99	0.50	Subterranean	65,100
<b>Clover, White and Ladino</b>	Cool-season perennial; b, e	N, C, S	Moist bottoms and productive uplands	B:2-4; 0-¼ in. deep	N, C:Sept.–Oct. S:Sept.15–Nov.15 N, C:Feb.1–Apr.1	85	99	0.50	Clover	680,000

<b>Cowpeas</b>	Warm-season annual; a, c, i	N, C, S	Well drained	Rows: 30-40, B:120; 2-3 in. deep	May1–June 15	80	98	0.25	Cowpea	3,600
<b>Crownvetch</b>	Cool-season perennial; c	N	Well drained	B:8-10; ¼-½ in. deep	Sept.–Oct.	65	95	0.50	Crownvetch	242,550
<b>Lespedeza, Annual</b>	Warm-season annual; a, b	N, C	Avoid lime soils of Black Belt	B:25-35; ¼-½ in. deep	Feb.15–Apr.11	85	99	0.50	Lespedeza	230,000 to 340,000
<b>Lespedeza, Sericea</b>	Warm-season perennial; a, b, c	N, C, S	Moist, well drained; avoid lime soils	No herbicide B:30, With herbicide D:20; Use hulled seed; ¼ in. deep	N:Mar.15–May 15 or June 15–July 15 C:Mar.1–May 1 S: Feb.1 –May 1	85	99	0.50	Lespedeza	370,000
<b>Lupine, Blue</b>	Cool-season annual; a, c, e	S	Well drained; if fertilized, does well on sandy soils	D:50-75, B:100; 1½ in. deep	Sept.15–Nov.1	80	98	0.30	Lupine	3,000
<b>Rape, Annual*</b>	Warm-season annual; c, j	N, C, S	Well drained, productive	B:10, D:5; 0-½ in. deep	Feb. –Mar.	85	99	0.20		156,000
<b>Soybeans</b>	Warm-season annual; a, f	N, C, S	Deep loam, bottoms	D:60-100; 1-3 in. deep	N:May 1-30 C:May 1-30 S:Before June 15	80	98	0.10	Soybean	Variable
<b>Sweetclover</b>	Cool-season annual or biennial; a, c, e	Black Belt	Lime soils of Black Belt and others with high pH	B:12-15; ¼-½ in. deep	Sept.–Oct.	80	99	0.50	Alfalfa	258,000
<b>Vetch, Commons<sup>5</sup></b>	Cool-season annual; a, c, e	N, C, S	Well drained	B:30-40; 1-2 in. deep	C:Sept.1–Oct.15; S:Sept.15–Nov.1	80	98	0.10	Pea and Vetch	8,000
<b>Vetch, Hairy<sup>5</sup></b>	Cool-season annual; a, c, e	N, C, S	Well drained	B:20-25; 1-2 in. deep	N:Sept.1–Oct.15 C:Sept.1–Oct.15 S:Sept.15–Nov.1	80	98	0.10	Pea and Vetch	16,000

\* Rape is not a legume but is included in this publication for convenience.

- <sup>1</sup> **Uses:** a. Hay  
b. Permanent pastures  
c. Soil improvement  
d. Grain  
e. Cool-season grazing  
f. Summer temporary grazing  
g. Silage  
h. Late fall grazing  
i. Wildlife food  
j. Spring hog grazing

<sup>2</sup> N-North; C-Central; S-South

<sup>3</sup> B-Broadcast; D-Drill

<sup>4</sup> **DO NOT** inoculate and treat legumes with fungicides at the same time. Apply treatment at least 48 hours before planting and then inoculate at planting time. **DO NOT** mix inoculated legume seed with fertilizer.

<sup>5</sup> If a vetch/small grain mixture is desired, broadcast plant 25 to 30 pounds of common vetch or 18 to 20 pounds of hairy vetch with 60 to 90 pounds of small grain per acre.

**STAGE OF HARVEST FOR SILAGE OR HAY:**

For most legumes, the early bloom stage is the best time to harvest.