Sunn Hemp

Crotalaria juncea

Season type: Summer legume

Uses

Compaction reduction	E	Attract beneficials	F
Residue persistence	G	Nitrogen scavenger	F
Erosion control	VG	P & K scavenger	F
Weed control	E	Forage quality	G
Nematode control	E		

E=Excellent; VG=Very Good; G=Good; F=Fair; P=Poor/None

Seeding rate: 20 to 40 lb/acre (with cowpea inoculant)

Planting date: at least 9 weeks before average frost

Production

Residue: 5,000 or more lb/acre in 8-12 weeks

Nitrogen: up to 120 lb N/acre

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Native to India and Pakistan. Heavily used in Brazil as a cover crop.

Nitrogen fixation
A legume, sunn hemp can produce 120 pounds of nitrogen per acre in two to three months.

Surface residue
Rapid growth means sunn hemp can be planted after a summer crop and produce large amounts of biomass before being killed by frost.

Pest control
Shows tolerance and/or resistance to root-knot and reniform nematodes.

Sunn hemp fiber is used for twine, rope, rug yarn, and paper.

Weed control
Allelopathic compounds produced by sunn hemp inhibit weeds. Shading during growth and residue after frost-kill also provide good weed control.

Seeds are expensive and limited, since sunn hemp is a tropical crop. Most seeds in USA are produced in Hawaii.

P. Charles / USDA National Plant Materials Center

National Soil Dynamics Laboratory
Conservation Systems Research

Conservation Systems
Fact Sheet No. 04h
February 2014

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