Velvet Bean

Mucuna pruriens var *utilis*

David Weaver, Auburn University

Season type: Summer annual

Uses

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

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

Seeding rate: 20–40 lb/acre. Best to use a planter with a corn plate (or similar). Plant about 2 to 3 seeds per foot in the row.
Inoculant: Cowpea type.

Planting date: Late spring to early summer.

Production

Residue: 5,000 to 10,000 lb/acre. Nitrogen: Up to 270 lb N/acre.

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Weed control
Velvet bean is excellent for weed control. Its vining habit covers the ground and smothers weeds.

Nematode control
Velvet bean actively suppresses a number of nematode species, including root knot and reniform types.

Erosion control
The long vines (10- to 30-feet) and large leaves cover the soil and protect it from erosional forces. Large amounts of organic matter build soil quality.

Mixtures
Buckwheat germinates and grows rapidly to suppress early weeds while the velvet bean is getting established. Tall, sturdy crops (**sorghum-sudangrass**, **sunflower**, **pearl millet**) can support velvet bean vines.

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As a cover crop, velvet bean can be terminated 90 days after planting, as flowers begin to form. Seed production requires about 120 days to maturity.

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