

BUSH CLOVER

Lespedeza thunbergii



Characteristics

- Type: Shrub
- Zone: 4 to 8
- Height: 3.00 to 6.00 feet
- Spread: 3.00 to 8.00 feet
- Bloom Time: August to September
- Bloom Description: Rose purple
- Sun: Full sun to part shade
- Water: Medium
- Maintenance: Medium
- Suggested Use: Naturalize
- Flower: Showy
- Tolerate: Drought, Erosion

Culture

Easily grown in average, medium moisture, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade. Best flowering is in full sun. Performs well in infertile, sandy soils. Good drainage is essential. Tolerates drought once established. Avoid over fertilization. Blooms on new growth, so prune as needed in late winter to early spring. Although the roots are winter hardy to USDA Zone 6, the top growth will die to the ground in hard winters. Some gardeners simply prune plants to the ground in late winter each year. Plants will naturalize in the garden by reseeding and by prostrate stems rooting at the nodes.

Noteworthy Characteristics

Lespedeza thunbergii, commonly called bush clover, is a deciduous, semi-woody shrub with an arching, fountain-like habit. When cut to the ground in late winter to early spring, it responds by producing rapid annual growth to 3- 6' tall and as wide during the following growing season. It features alternate, trifoliate, bluish-green leaves (leaflets to 1-2" long) and drooping racemes (to 6" long) of rosy-purple, pea-like flowers which are grouped into loose, pendulous flower panicles (to 2' long). Blooms appear in late summer to early fall. Genus name honors Vincente Manuel de Cespedes, Spanish Governor of West Florida from 1784 to 1790. Specific epithet honors Carl Peter Thunberg (1743-1828), Swedish naturalist, who collected plants in this species in Japan in 1775-76.

Problems

No serious insect or disease problems.

Garden Uses

Excellent fall-blooming specimen for sunny areas of the landscape. Shrub borders. Slopes/hills. Cottage gardens. Spill over retaining wall. Mix with perennials.

Courtesy of Missouri Botanical Society Plant Finder