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Sericea Lespedeza – Slowing the Spread

The last page of the *KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide* has traditionally been dedicated to a single weed: sericea lespedeza. It's no wonder. Sericea is considered a Category C weed, meaning it's well established in large or extensive populations. That's unfortunately accurate.

If you're familiar with sericea lespedeza, the broadleaf legume sticks out like a sore thumb against desirable forages. If you're a grassland manager and *don't* know what it looks like, now is a great time to learn. One great resource is a website called *Kansas Wildflowers and Native Grasses*. Visit <https://kswildflower.org/index.php> and type Sericea in the search box to get not only a plant description, but some helpful pictures as well.

If you find it on your property, the vegetative stage it is currently in provides a good control window. Effective vegetative state herbicides include triclopyr based products (Remedy Ultra is triclopyr alone; PastureGard HL is triclopyr plus fluroxypyr) or Surmount, a mix of triclopyr and fluroxypyr (Surmount is a restricted use pesticide). Once sericea starts to branch (plants sometimes reach three feet or more in height), consider products containing the active ingredient metsulfuron (Escort XP and others). Products can be used as spot treatments or broadcast applied. Always read and follow label directions.

Labels *will* include application rates, but other quick references can help as well. The *2024 KSU Weed Control Guide* (<https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/chemweedguide.pdf>) is a great start. Additional spot treatment recommendations can be found in a recent KSU Agronomy eUpdate article: <https://eupdate.agronomy.ksu.edu/article/early-summer-control-of-sericea-lespedeza-using-herbicides-592-3>. Both are available upon request from any District Office.

Your local Noxious Weed Department is also a great resource. They can help you not only with product selection and purchase, but many have product rate quick reference charts, too. Their local focus on noxious weeds means they should be a part of your control efforts.

Sericea isn't typically controlled by a single application in a single year. Sometimes it takes multiple products and multiple methods, including anything from multiple spot treatment applications through the year (herbicides often reduce stands to the point spot treatments can be used in the future but will likely be needed on a regular basis to keep the weed in check) to combinations of prescribed fire with herbicides or even mowing or grazing with goats. The weed's invasive nature and large seed bank requires continued attention to reduce its spread. Feel free to drop us a line if any of these resources can help.