Cowpeas Legume

Key Features

Cowpeas are the most productive heat-adapted legume used in the U.S. They thrive in hot, moist zones where corn flourishes, but require more heat for optimum growth. Cowpeas are a deep-rooted, vining legume that protects soil from erosion and can smother weeds. When terminated, the dense residue remaining contributes to soil organic matter and helps to improve soil structure.

Cowpeas make an excellent nitrogen source ahead of cash crops and attract many beneficial insects that prey on pests. When cowpeas reach peak nitrogen production, they can produce 100 to 150 pounds of nitrogen/acre. This nitrogen fixing also makes cowpeas high in protein which can provide excellent, digestible summer forage.

Application

Cover Crop
Forage

Planting Time

Summer

Establishment

Plant early summer when soil temperatures are at least 60 degrees and rising for best results. At the end of the summer, cowpeas can be planted up to 6 weeks before the first frost to achieve adequate growth as a cover crop or forage.

Management Keys

Cowpeas have excellent drought resistance combined with good tolerance of heat. They have low fertility requirements and tolerance of a range of soil types making them viable throughout the temperate U.S. wherever summers are warm or hot but frequently dry.

For forage or cover crop use, combine cowpeas with other warm season annuals such as sorghum-sudangrass, sudangrass, or millet for a very high-quality forage that can be grazed or harvested as silage.

Red Ripper and Iron and Clay varieties of cowpeas can yield very similar results. The Red Ripper variety tends to better handle a larger variety of soil types and mature slightly earlier than Iron and Clay.

Seeding Rates

Drilled	40-60#
Precision Planting	30-40#
Broadcast	80-100#
Aerial	NR

Attributes

N Fixation	4
Nutrient Scavenging	2
Nutrient Release	5
Wind Erosion	3
Water Erosion	3

Scale 1-5 (1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent)

Seeding Depth

½" - 1½"

Prairie Creek Seed

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