

Vegetation Management Section

Materials

Groundcover Descriptions

The NCDOT utilizes several plant types which are not categorized as turfgrasses. These various plants and their uses are described below.

Temporary Ground Covers

Sweet Sudan Grass (*Sorghum saccharum*) - Sudan grass is used for temporary seeding during the summer months in the eastern one-third of North Carolina. It is an annual grass with excellent drought tolerance and an aggressive fibrous root system with good soil-holding characteristics. It will grow in almost any soil and thrives in semi-arid regions.

German Millet (*Setaria italica* var. 'Stramineofructa') and Browntop Millet (*Panicum ramosum*) - Millets are members of the grass family. The millet species used by the NCDOT are adapted to hot, dry weather and infertile soil conditions. They are used statewide as temporary ground covers during the summer months. They grow rapidly and range in height from 1 to 4 feet. They are sometimes included by the NCDOT as supplements to permanent seed mixes.

Rye (*Secale cereale*) - Rye is a grain used for temporary seeding statewide during the cooler months of the year (October - April). It is a member of the grass family and used as a temporary ground cover due to its fibrous roots and ability to grow well in infertile soils.

Nurse Plant Species

Kobe Lespedeza (*Lespedeza striata* var. 'Kobe') and Korean Lespedeza (*Lespedeza stipulacea*) - These lespedezas are annual plants used as supplements in permanent seed mixtures. They germinate very quickly and produce rapid growth. They provide soil stability and protection for slower germinating turfgrass species. Kobe and Korean Lespedeza will reseed themselves for years if not mown. They are well adapted to poor, acidic soils.

Perennial Ground Covers

Sericea Lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata* 'Dumont') - Sericea Lespedeza is a perennial legume used widely as a cover crop on poor soils. Its fibrous root system and good soil-holding characteristics make it particularly effective as a ground cover on highway cut-slopes. It grows to a height of three feet, is well adapted to heavy soils, and is essentially weed free.

Crown Vetch (*Coronilla varia*) - Crown Vetch is useful for stabilizing rocky, steep slopes and highway cuts. It spreads by creeping stems and forms a dense cover about two feet tall. It prefers neutral soils but tolerates slightly acidic conditions. Once established, crown vetch provides an attractive cover and prevents erosion while requiring very little maintenance.