

BIRDSFOOT TREFOIL VARIETIES FOR SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

(A Preliminary Report)

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INTRODUCTION

Birdsfoot trefoil (Lotus corniculatus L.) is a cool-season legume which has only recently received attention in the United States. It has found considerable use in the northeastern states, along the northern part of the Pacific Coast, and in the southern part of the corn belt including Missouri and Arkansas. Birdsfoot trefoil resembles a fine-stemmed alfalfa (Medicago sativa L.) and may have as many as 100 stems on a single crown. Birdsfoot trefoil is very winter hardy and has good drought tolerance. The species will grow and persist on poorly-drained and infertile soils and on shallow soils. Birdsfoot trefoil is well adapted for use as a permanent pasture legume and is desirable since the plant has few insect or disease problems and does not cause bloat even in pure stands. Several birdsfoot trefoil varieties are available and information on their adaptability to the climatic conditions in southwest Louisiana is needed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sixteen varieties of birdsfoot trefoil were seeded at 10 lb/A with a Kincaid small plot seeder in six 8-inch drills on October 15, 1980. A randomized complete block design with four replications was used. Fertilizer was applied broadcast at the rate of 500 lb/A of 0-20-20 (N-P₂O₅-K₂O) at planting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dry fall and winter conditions resulted in poor stand establishment and consequently, were not obtained. 'Vega II' showed the greatest seedling vigor and earliest spring growth. Vega II did not exhibit the usual winter rosette form as noted for the other varieties. Seed production was limited by frequent spring rains and high relative humidity. Stands were judged to be inadequate for harvest and the experiment discontinued. Varieties presently available did not appear to be adapted to southwestern Louisiana conditions.