

## Lespedeza - Growing Guide

### Growing Lespedeza

Commonly known as 'Bush Clover'

Lespedeza are deciduous subshrubs which brighten up the garden in late summer and on into autumn when most other shrubs have finished flowering. Their flowers and the timing of flowering has much in common with indigofera.

In colder counties lespedeza will die down to ground level in winter. This is why the term 'subshrub' is used. That is not to say that species of bush clover are in any way tender because they are not. It is simply that in coastal or more frost free areas they may well not die down completely. This is especially true of *L. thunbergii*.

Lespedeza all have attractive trifoliate or clover-like leaves and pea shaped flowers in long panicles or racemes. They make excellent plants in the shrub border or mixed with other herbaceous plants.

*L. bicolor* 'Summer Beauty' grows, once established, to 4-5ft each season. It has slender racemes of rose-purple flowers of 2-5in in length from the upper leaf axils.

*L. thunbergii* grows up to 6-8ft where it does not die down in winter and starts to develop a woody stem. It produces numerous flower racemes which are up to 6in long and also from the upper leaf axils. The flowers are a rosy purple.

Lespedeza produce numerous new shoots from the base of established plants. During dormancy in winter or early spring the roots can be chopped or pulled out to create new plants.

These plants are very late to come into growth in the spring just as they are late to begin dormancy. Once they start to shoot trim off last year's dead growth and do not be too quick to think they are dead. We get a few panic calls about this in May each year in the nursery. The same applies to indigofera.



*Lespedeza thunbergii*



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*Lespedeza* 'Summer Beauty'



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