

Kudzu History

Cultivated in Asia for centuries for food and medicinal use, kudzu was imported to the USA in the late 1800s. In the 1930s, the Soil Erosion Service handed out millions of plants to southern land-owners to battle erosion and add nitrogen to the soil.

By the 1950s, kudzu had spread rapidly throughout the south due to the warm climate and plentiful rainfall. Its status in 1970 was changed to "common weed" by the USDA. In 1998, Congress officially listed kudzu under the Federal Noxious Weed Act.

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Kudzu Facts

- Common names for kudzu include: mile-a-minute vine, foot-a-night vine, and the vine that ate the South.
- In the 1940s, numerous "Kudzu Clubs" were formed throughout the south, which hosted Kudzu Festivals and crowned Kudzu Queens.
- The purplish-red kudzu flowers can reach up to 1 foot long.
- Kudzu root starch is widely used in Japan as a thickener when cooking.
- Kudzu vines can grow as much as a foot a day and 60 feet in a season.

Have More Questions?



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The Kudzu Conundrum

Is this aggressive vine that is so prevalent in Polk County a plague on our land or a forage of opportunity?
The answer may be:
a little of both!

KUDZU PROS

- Young kudzu produces high-quality forage that is appreciated by both livestock and poultry.
- Because of its vigorous growth and deep root system, kudzu is a highly effective erosion control plant for steep slopes.
- Hobby and commercial farms can benefit from the high nitrogen content in the underground root system by turning under the established kudzu after it dies, at the end of the season.
- The plant's roots contain large amounts of carbohydrates that can easily be converted to biofuel, and it is currently being studied as a source of ethanol.
- The leaves, roots, flowers and vine tips of kudzu are all edible. Young kudzu shoots are tender and taste similar to snow peas.
- Many medicinal uses for kudzu are being explored including studies on its impact on alcoholism, diabetes, high blood pressure, and migraine headaches.

KUDZU CONTROL

Biological/Mechanical Controls

- **Grazing:** goats and cattle are effective but require fencing & care making them an often impractical solution.
- **Mowing:** vines must be mowed and not allowed to regrow green foliage for 1-5 years. A solution for flat areas.
- **Digging:** a labor-intensive effort that involves finding all crowns and looking for any rooted vines that can create new crowns.

Chemical Controls

- **Aminopyralid (Milestone):** labeled as a "reduced risk" herbicide for kudzu & other broadleaf weeds. *Application rate - 7oz/acre when actively growing*
- **Clopyralid (Transline):** common kudzu control chemical with nearly a 2-yr residue. *Application rate - .75qt/acre when actively growing*
- **Dicamba (Vanquish):** Low volatility version of Dicamb. Can apply just before bud break to root areas. *Application rate - 1-2oz per crown*
- **Sulfometuron methyl (Oust):** Will control kudzu within 2-3 weeks if applied during active growth. *Application rate - 6oz/acre*

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KUDZU CONS

- Once kudzu forms a blanket over land or trees, light can't get through, so the vast majority of the underlying plants or trees eventually die.
- Utility and railroad companies spend considerable amounts of time and money to control kudzu along tracks and around utility poles.
- Kudzu serves as a host for agricultural diseases and insect pests such as the kudzu bug.
- Dense shading in kudzu-covered areas significantly reduces the biodiversity of native plants.
- Kudzu weighs down trees and can increase snow load on trees enough to cause their tops to break.
- Control of well-established kudzu stands can take up to 10 years.
- Although it does not survive well in shaded forests, kudzu thrives in sunny areas, such as our roadsides, yards, and pastures.