



Perennial peanut is a warm season legume that is well adapted to the lower Coastal Plain. This species is also often called rhizoma peanut and when managed correctly produces excellent quality forage for hay, live-stock grazing and wildlife food plots. In addition to high forage quality, perennial peanut is also tolerant of sandy soils, nematodes, soil acidity/ aluminum toxicity, drought, heavy grazing and relatively low fertility once established. These characteristics, along with demand for high quality horse hay, have led to an expansion in perennial peanut acreage in South Georgia and North Florida. Stands have persisted in the lower Coastal Plain of South Carolina for over ten years, and the crop appears to be poised for expansion in warm coastal areas of our state.

Tips For Successful Establishment:

Consider freeze damage potential. Perennial peanut is a subtropical legume that has marginal cold tolerance for upper portions of the South Carolina coastal plain. There is some risk of winter kill; however, stands have persisted near Blackville SC for many years now. It is difficult to estimate how far north that this forage should be planted, but sites below a line running from the Savannah River Site through Sumter and Florence should be relatively safe.

Prepare the site. Ideally perennial peanut should be established in a weed free, clean tilled site. Perennial peanut is best suited to light textured, well drained soils. Heavy clays should be avoided due to slower establishment times but can be successful in well drained well prepared sites. Cold tolerance may also be reduced on clay sites in cold, wet winters. Perennial peanut is tolerant of low pH soils, however soil pH should ideally be maintained in the 5.5-6.0 range. All legumes including perennial peanut require phosphorus and calcium for good growth and persistence. P and Ca should be adjusted to the medium range for perennial peanut. Potassium should be maintained in the med to high level for hay production and in the medium range for grazing or wildlife food plots.

Perennial peanut must be established from sprigs that can be dug by hand or with a typical bermudagrass digger. Sprigs are ideally planted on the day of digging, but can be planted one or two days following sprigging if they are stored in a cool, shady, moist area. Sprigs should be planted in February or March. Sprigging rates can range from 40-100 bu/acre with higher rates resulting in faster establishment times and less risk of weed competition. Sprigs can be planted in 18" rows or broadcast and harrowed into clean tilled fields. If broadcasting and harrowing a heavy sprig

rate should be used. Plant sprigs at 1.5-2" deep and cultipack if possible after planting to conserve moisture. No additional fertilization should be needed following establishment. Nitrogen applications only encourage weed competition.

Control weeds. In most food plot situations, frequent mowing to a 2" height or just above perennial peanut leaves will reduce shading by weeds and encourage perennial peanuts to run and spread.

Irrigate if possible. If available, irrigation will speed establishment. Frequent applications in dry years with sprinklers or even drip irrigation systems has cut establishment time in half in many cases. Peanut is drought tolerant, so irrigation is not required, but is a positive factor in establishment

Monitor Stands. Perennial peanut is not affected by any significant insects or diseases. Occasionally grasshoppers can infest areas, but no economic threshold has been detected for their treatment. Typically turkeys or quail will eradicate these pests. No armyworm problems have been reported with perennial peanut. Wild hogs can be a problem and often root up large areas of the crop to consume the rhizomes as well as earthworms and insect larva that reside in the soil. Cattle can also learn to root up the rhizomes when given access to the stand for extended periods of time.

Consider planting a winter cover crop. Perennial peanut can be overseeded with crimson clover and/or oats as a winter cover crop. This can extend the grazing season or provide a hay crop and will also help with first year winterhardiness. Be sure to remove any excess cover crop forage in late spring to prevent shading perennial peanuts during greenup.

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