ELEGANT LUPINE

Lupinus elegans Kunth

plant symbol = LUEL4

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program

Alternate Names
Mexican lupine

Uses
This legume has shown considerable promise as a winter cover crop. It produces good to excellent ground cover in young irrigated citrus groves, and is an excellent producer of honey nectar.

Status
Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description
Lupinus elegans Kunth, elegant lupine, grows to a height of 4 feet and is 3 feet wide. Growth is from a central stem which branches frequently. The blooming period lasts for several weeks, commencing about mid-January and continuing to late March. Overall seed production is good, but the amount available for harvest at any one time is rather limited as the seed pods shatter readily upon reaching maturity. The seed produced is small, hard, persists in the soil, and volunteers readily in the autumn months.

Adaptation and Distribution
Elegant lupine is adapted to fine and medium textured soils with moderate fertility and a pH of 6 to 7. The species has some drought tolerance, but prefers a minimum of 35 inches of annual precipitation to grow.

For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

Establishment
Plow and/or disk the soil thoroughly and follow by firmly packing the soil while it is still moist. Fertilize at the recommended rate at or prior to seeding. Twenty-five pounds of seed per acre are required for broadcast seedings, while 12 to 15 pounds per acre should be used for row planting. Row planting results in more satisfactory inoculation and more rapid early growth. Inoculation is required regardless of planting method. Pack the soil firmly over either broadcast or row planted seed.

Management
This lupine can withstand moderate drought, but will grow considerably better if supplemental irrigation can be provided during drought periods. Seed harvesting occurs from mid-March to mid-April depending upon location, soil, weather and plant conditions. The seed is harvested while much of the plant is still green. The crop is mowed when the optimum amount of nearly mature seed is present and is allowed to dry on the ground. When the leaves, pods and stalks are nearly dry, the material is run through a conventional seed harvesting combine.

Pests and Potential Problems
There are no known serious insect pests of the plant; however, several insects will attack the seed both on the plant and in storage.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)
Armex (Mexico) is an informal release. Seed is available at most commercial seed sources.

Prepared By & Species Coordinator:
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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <http://plants.usda.gov> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>.