Sunn hemp

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info sheet

What is Sun hemp?

Sunn hemp *(Crotalaia juncea)* is a fast growing, heat tolerant legume. The pea-type flowers are bright yellow. Seed pods are round, about 1 inch (2–3 cm) long, and 1⁄4–1⁄2 inch (5–10 mm) wide. Sunn hemp can reach a height of 6ft (1.8m) within 90 days and is an excellent green manure crop.

Sunn hemp Benefits:

In Afghanistan (mostly in eastern provinces), farmers grow Sunn hemp for

- animal feed - leaves can be used as fodder and seed can be fed to poultry,
- living fences and windbreaks,
- for cooking and heating,
- Soil improvement . As a legume, sunn hemp can add nitrogen and organic matter to the soil, increasing overall soil quality. Further, sunn hemp produces a compound that is toxic to several nematode pests, making it and effective pest management tool.

Picture from: flickr.com

Recommended Growing Conditions:

Soils. Sunn hemp can grow in wide range of soil textures and tolerates alkaline soils with pH's up to 8.4 (Many soils in Afghanistan are alkaline with pH 7-8.6).

Climate. Sunn hemp is adapted to hot, semiarid, and arid areas and is drought tolerant. According to the NRCS, planting Sunn hemp at higher elevations (up to 2000ft/609m) should be limited to the warmer spring and summer months, but can be planted year round at lower elevations.

Inoculation. Special inoculants - bacteria in the soil that help legumes take nitrogen from the air for use in the plant – may be required. Those inoculants used for cowpea often work adequately.

Soil incorporation (plowing in) should be done before the plant reaches full-bloom stage, or it becomes too fibrous to effectively decompose and difficult to manage.

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