

Oolloo

(Centrosema brasilianum)

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DESCRIPTION

Oolloo (*Centrosema brasilianum*) is a short lived perennial climbing and twining legume which can produce roots from the stems if conditions are favourable.

Leaves are trifoliate with ovate leaflets 3.6-4.3 cm long and 2.0-2.9 cm wide. Flowers are large, purple, flat, 34-42 mm long and 38-44 mm broad. Pods are 10-15 cm long, with a beak 20-26 mm long, containing 14-16 seeds. Seeds are cylindrical and a uniform grey-brown (fawn colour), 39,000 per kg.

In the NT, flowering usually commences in mid March and continues until mid June.

A variable number of Oolloo plants (30-100%) survive from one growing season to the next, depending partly on the length of the dry season.



CLIMATE AND SOILS

Centrosema brasilianum has a wide natural distribution in the tropics of South America, from 16°S in Brazil to 10°N in Venezuela. It is found in a range of environments from arid (370 mm average annual rainfall, 10 months dry season) to humid (2,920 mm average annual rainfall, no dry season).

Ooloo has shown good growth on a range of neutral to slightly acidic upland soils, including Berrimah red earth, yellow earths, lithosol, Blain sandy red earth, Tippera clay loam and sandy floodplain fringe country.

At introduction sites, it has shown good persistence, surviving for six to 11 years under uncontrolled heavy grazing, limited fertiliser applications and occasional burning.



SOWING

Seed should be sown at 2-6 kg/ha depending on seed bed preparation and proposed end use. For best results, seed should be sown into a well prepared seed bed.

Ooloo is not specific in its Rhizobium requirements in the Northern Territory, having grown well without inoculation at a number of sites.

FERTILISER REQUIREMENTS

The type and rate of fertiliser to apply depends on soil type, but generally superphosphate or its equivalent at a rate of 100-250 kg/ha should be applied on virgin or previously unfertilised areas at sowing.

In subsequent years further fertiliser should be applied as maintenance dressings of 50-100 kg/ha of super per year.

Applications of potassium, molybdenum or zinc fertilisers may be necessary on some soils.

If you are unsure of the fertiliser requirements, check with a DBIRD Advisory Officer for advice before sowing.



YIELD

Ooloo does not produce a tall sward and tends to climb up companion plants.

Dry matter yields of 6 t/ha have been achieved under raingrown conditions.

Seed yields of over 1,000 kg/ha have been harvested from trial plots. Ooloo can retain up to 60% of seed in pods well into the dry season.

GRAZING

Oolloo is readily grazed by cattle, and has been able to persist in situations under heavy, uncontrolled grazing.

Oolloo should not be grazed in the year of establishment before it has set seed, and only lightly during its first dry season.

MIXTURES

Grasses can be sown with Oolloo including Arnhem, Basilisk signal grass, Gayndah buffel, Jarra, pangola, Guinea grass, Kazungula setaria, Nixon Sabi grass and Silk sorghum.

HAY

To date little hay has been made from Oolloo, but it should make a good quality hay, either as legume hay or as grass/legume mixture with a suitable grass such as Jarra, pangola or Silk sorghum.

PESTS AND DISEASES

During periods of wet weather, Oolloo can be affected by a leaf blight caused by *Rhizoctonia* spp., but the areas involved are usually small.

Pod sucking bugs, pod borers and other insects can cause almost total loss of a seed crop. In seed crops, the insects should be monitored from the commencement of flowering and controlled if necessary.

WARNING

Pasture plants have the potential to become weeds in certain situations. To prevent that, ensure that pasture seeds and/or vegetative materials are not inadvertently transferred to adjacent properties or road sides.

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Published: Wednesday 3 September 2003.

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