

# SUNN HEMP

TALL, FIBROUS LEGUME

A tall-growing summer annual legume, sunn hemp tolerates hot, dry conditions well. Use as a green manure/cover crop to provide both organic matter and fix nitrogen during the period between summer and winter cash crop. Sunn hemp produces significant biomass in 6-7 weeks.

Sunn hemp was originally used as a fiber crop in India and has a high lignin content. It is not a very suitable forage for milking cows since it starts to become very fibrous while still in the vegetative stage. But it can be grazed 25 to 35 DAP (Days After Planting) after that point the stems become more lignified and the cows will graze less of the stems and only the leaves.

In good growing conditions, the plants can reach a height of 6 feet with a stem diameter of up to 1-2 inches. It has a long tap root with many lateral branches.

Sunn hemp works well in summer mixes to add varying heights to the cover, but keep the seeding rate low in a mix, as it is competitive. It performs better on soils that are sandy or well-drained.

It should only be grown if it can be easily terminated with available equipment. Not suitable for small scale gardeners. Best mowed with flail mower or chopper and left as residue or incorporated as a green manure.

## Using Sunn Hemp for management of Plant Parasitic Nematodes

Sunn hemp can be used as a rotational break crop for suppressing plant parasitic nematode populations in both vegetable and field cropping systems. Sunn hemp uses different modes of action to suppress plant parasitic nematodes, making it an efficient cover crop for nematode management. It is not only a poor host/"non-host" to many plant-parasitic nematodes, but it has been shown to produce toxic compounds that work against several key nematode pests.

Sunn hemp also can enhance natural enemies of plant-parasitic nematodes, such as fungi that trap nematodes or feed on their eggs.

Besides suppressing plant-parasitic nematodes directly, sunn hemp can also manage nematode damage on crops indirectly by increasing plant tolerance against these pests. Sunn hemp plantings have been demonstrated to enhance free-living beneficial nematodes in the soil that are involved in nutrient cycling, increasing nutrients available for plant uptake. A healthier plant will then have a higher tolerance to plant-parasitic nematode damage.

**Inoculate with N-Dure Peanut Inoculant [For use on Cow-Peas, Sunn Hemp, and Lespedeza] (*Bradyrhizobium spp*)**



Sunn hemp at 32 days after planting is still decent forage.



## At A Glance

- Tropical warm season legume, high biomass producer
- Suppresses weeds and nematodes
- Can be grazed in the early stages of growth

## Establishment

**Planting Dates:** Late spring/early summer. Will need 8-12 weeks of warm weather for ideal nitrogen and biomass production.

**Seeding Rate:** 20-40 lbs/A

Large seed box required.

**Depth:** 1/2" -1"

**Speed:** Rapid

Southeast  
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