

Amorpha canescens Leadplant

Amorpha canescens (Leadplant) is a small, semi-upright shrub (2-3' tall) with fine-textured gray-green leaves and showy, purple flower spikes. The name Leadplant comes from the gray-whitish pubescent leaves that appear to be covered in white lead, a paint pigment. Feathery, bi-pinnately compound leaves unfurl in late spring, which are followed by terminal spikes of pale to bright purple flowers (2-6" long) for three weeks in June to August. Leadplant is adapted to dry sand prairies and savannas, using a long taproot (7-20' deep) to survive drought and heat. This adaptation allows it to thrive in hot, full sun conditions and it is suitable for a low maintenance garden, water wise landscapes, perennial borders or a wildlife garden. The plant spreads by rhizomes, and may not bloom for several years until the underground root system is well established. Should not be disturbed once established. A member of the legume family, *Amorpha canescens* is also a nitrogen-fixing plant. The flowers attract many pollinators, including long-tongued bees, short-tongued bees and beneficial wasps. Foliage is high in protein and palatable to deer, rabbits and livestock, so plants may need fencing where herbivore pressure is high.

Botanical Name: *Amorpha canescens*

Common Name: Leadplant

Family: Fabaceae

Nativity: Great Lake Native

USDA Zone: 2-9

Light Type: Full sun

Soil Type: Clay, Loam, Sand

Soil Preferences: Well-drained

Soil Moisture: Dry, Moist

Typical height (ft): 2-3'

Typical width (ft): 2-2.5'

Foliage: Gray Green, fine textured

Bloom Time: June, July, August

Bloom: Pale to dark purple

Ecological features: Nitrogen fixer, attracts pollinators, provides erosion control

Tolerance of: Drought, Salt, Heat

Additional notes: Low maintenance, naturalizes, has taproot & (branched) secondary lateral & vertical roots that are typically deeper than those of associated bunchgrasses (7-20 feet, depending on soil); larval host plant; may need fencing where herbivore browse pressure is high.

Companion plants: Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Sideoats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), Showy Goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*), New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*), Sweet Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

For more information see:

<https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/shrub/lead-plant>

<http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/leadplantx.htm>

<https://www.americanmeadows.com/lead-plant-seeds>

<https://www.midwestgroundcovers.com/plant/Amorpha-canescens-NGN>

<http://www.newmoonnursery.com/plant/Amorpha-canescens>

Images of *Amorpha canescens*



Amorpha_canescens_kz1.jpg
flower form



Leadplant_(Amorpha_canescens)_on_Sand_Lake_WMD_01_(13857585943).jpg
plant form



Amorpha_canescens_kz02.jpg
gray green leaves in spring



Amorpha canescens 2019-04-16 0230.jpg
Seed heads

Image choices for narrative:

Leadplant_(Amorpha_canescens)_on_Sand_Lake_WMD_01_(13857585943).jpg - plant form
Amorpha_canescens_kz1.jpg - flower form