

Green Manures No. TGM3

Centro, *Centrosema pubescens*

Green manures are plants which are grown mainly for the benefit of the soil. They can be grown as part of a rotation or in an intercropping system to build soil fertility, or as a cover crop to protect bare soil from erosion. Full details on the benefits and practice of using green manures can be found in HDRA's booklet 'Green manures/Cover crops'.

Centro (*Centrosema pubescens*)



Growing conditions

- Annual rainfall: Centro prefers wet areas, with up to 1,750mm of rain, but will grow in areas with 750mm or over. It tolerates temporary waterlogging.
- Altitude: It grows best at altitudes up to 915 metres.
- Temperature: The preferred range is between 13° C and 30° C. It has a very low frost tolerance and is severely damaged by frost.
- Soil type: The most suitable soil type is between pH 4.9 and pH 6.0. It tolerates a wide range of soils, from sand to clays.

Nitrogen fixation

Centro is a legume. This means that it has nodules on its roots which contain bacteria. These bacteria take nitrogen from the air. This is known as nitrogen fixation. The plant uses this to grow and when the legume is dug into the soil, the extra nitrogen is made available to the next crop.

Cultivation

Sow 8 to 9kg of seed per hectare or broadcast just before the rainy season. Cover the seeds to a depth of 2.5 to 5cm. Centro may require inoculation with *centro rhizobium* which is the bacteria that helps it to take nitrogen from the air. If you are already growing centro then you can obtain the rhizobium from taking soil from the area where it is growing and mix with the seed before sowing. Dig in any time up to flowering.

Growth form

Centro is a perennial climber which can be grown as an annual. It is very leafy and does not become woody for at least 18 months.

Recommended application

It is grown as a green manure or cover crop to suppress weeds, add fertility and control erosion.

Human food

Centro is not suitable for human consumption, but it is good animal fodder.

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