Forage Soybeans

Dennis W. Hancock,
Extension Forage Agronomist,
Crop and Soil Sciences Department

Forage soybeans are typically harvested for hay or silage. However, they can be used for late summer temporary grazing. Since they do not regrow once defoliate, strip-grazing (or frontal grazing) is the grazing system that is most likely to result in the most efficient use of the forage. Soybean forage is fairly digestible (up to 60%) and moderately-high in CP (17-19%). Stem size can be reduced, thus increasing digestibility, if seeding rates of 90 – 120 lbs of seed per acre are used. Planting late maturing varieties (maturity groups 6, 7, or 8) in early May through early June will result in forage soybean production best suited for high yields. Shorter periods of growth, such as part of a double- or triple-crop system, can be accommodated with early maturing varieties. However, productivity is expected to be substantially less.

Other Warm-Season Annual Legumes
Several other warm-season annual legumes are available, but are not commonly used. A partial list of those that could provide acceptable forage yields and quality include: alyceclover, annual peanut, cowpeas, hairy indigo, joint vetch, kudzu, lablab (sweet hyacinth bean), and velvetbean. In general, however, these species can be relatively expensive and difficult to establish, provide relatively low yields, and/or are not very tolerant of grazing. This relegates them to minor production niches, such as wildlife food plots, rather than.