

Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars

B. Legumes

3. Lablab-Macrotyloma

Lablab purpureus (L.) Sweet (lablab bean) cv. Rongai

Reg. No. B-3a-1

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Origin

Derived from seed obtained from the Department of Agriculture of Kenya by J. Miles of CSIRO, during his visit to that country in 1952. The seed came from the Rongai district near Nakuru (some 125 km north of Nairobi), under the local name "Brown Njaki" and was given the accession number C.P.I.17883. Tested initially at the Grafton and Wollongbar Experiment Stations and later at other locations (1,3,5), it was released by the New South Wales Department of Agriculture for grazing and forage production on the north coast of New South Wales in 1962 (5). Also performed successfully in trials by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries in the hilly sections of the Darling Downs (1) and the coastal areas of southern Queensland (2,7).

Morphological description (2,5, et al.)

A summer-growing, rampant and vigorously twining herbaceous annual or short-lived perennial; grows as an annual under grazing but if protected from stock and in a reasonably frost-free area a proportion of plants perennate. Cv. Rongai is a vigorous and leafy type compared with the usual forms of the species, stems reach 3-6 m. Leaves trifoliate; leaflets broad ovate-rhomboid, 7-15 cm long, thin, acute at apex, almost glabrous above and shortly hairy on lower surface. Petioles long and slender. Inflorescence lax, fascicled, of many-flowered racemes on elongated peduncles. Flowers white, on short pedicels; calyx broadly campanulate, two upper teeth connate, the three lower shorter than the tube; the standard expanded, the keel abruptly incurved. Pod 4-5 cm long, broadly scimitar-shaped or subfalcate, glabrous, and beaked by the persistent style, containing 2-4 seeds. Seeds buff to pale brown, ovoid, laterally compressed, with linear white conspicuous hilum, average 1.0 cm × 0.7 cm; 3600-4300 per kg.

Agronomic characters (2,3,5,7)

Summer-growing, making excellent growth under warm humid conditions, susceptible to frost but reasonably drought-tolerant and may grow satisfactorily under as little as 500 mm rainfall. Best adapted to frost-free coastal areas of good summer rainfall or much the same climatic environment as *Vigna sinensis*.

Cv. Rongai commences growth from October onwards depending on seasonal conditions; is characterized by high late-summer production and continuous growing late into autumn. It is more cold-tolerant than cowpeas or velvet beans and will continue growth in winter, holding its leaves well until cut by frost. It is also more cold-tolerant than Siratro (1). Flowering commences in May, the flowers are mainly cross pollinated, and seed matures later than most varieties of cowpeas; if unfrosted, flowering may continue through the winter until spring. Compared with other introductions of the species, cv. Rongai is a late-flowering, long-growing-season type and is more vigorous and taller-growing than most. It can adapt to a wide range of soils and soil conditions but will not grow on poorly drained soils or tolerate continued waterlogging. It is less able to use indigenous *Rhizobium* strains than cowpeas and needs inoculation with "cowpea" inoculum at sowing (4,6). It is palatable to stock (3), has a high protein content (2), and recovery from grazing is usually better than in cowpeas or velvet bean (2,5). Two cases of bloat have been recorded.

References

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