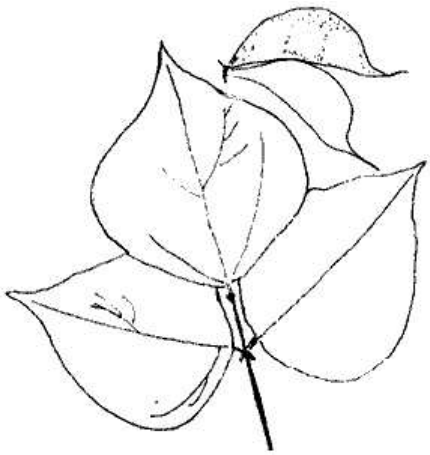
Green Manures No. TGM5

Lablab, *Lablab purpureus*

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'.**

Lablab is also known as hyacinth bean, bonavist



Growing conditions

- Annual rainfall: Lablab can survive in rainfall of 400mm to 2500mm.
- Altitude: It grows best at altitudes up to 2000m.
- Temperature: It grows best between 9° C and 30° C.
- Soil type: Lablab tolerates from pH 5.9 to 7.8, from sandy loam to heavy clay.

Nitrogen fixation

Lablab is a legume. This means that it has nodules on its roots which contain bacteria. These bacteria takes 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 lablab at 20-70kg/ha, and space the seeds 75-90cm apart. The seeds should be covered, preferably 2.5cm to 5cm depth.

Growth form

Lablab is a vigorous herbaceous annual or a short-lived perennial.

Recommended application

Lablab is grown as a cover crop/green manure to suppress weeds. It adds fertility to the soil and controls erosion.

You should dig lablab into the soil before the flowers appear. It may need initial irrigation to become established but it will be very drought tolerant thereafter. It is a good green manure for the dry season.

Human food

Lablab can be eaten as snap beans or dried beans. Beans should be cooked thoroughly.

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