

**A Conservation Plant Released by The Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Elsberry Plant Materials Center, Elsberry, Missouri**

# ILLINOIS COVEY GERmplasm

## false indigo bush

### *Amorpha fruticosa* L.

Illinois Covey Germplasm is a selected ecotype false indigo bush released in 2005 by the USDA-NRCS Elsberry Plant Materials Center.



*Figure 1. False indigo bush planting in flower.*

#### **Description**

Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush is a native legume shrub with attractive bright green foliage in an open canopy that grows up to 10 feet tall. The bulk of foliage and twigs are in the upper 1/3 of the crown. The finely divided leaves add a soft texture to the plant and are alternate, pinnately compound, 4 to 8 inches long, with 15 to 25 leaflets. Each rounded leaflet is up to two inches long and just over one inch wide with a small, bristle-like point. False indigo bush flowers in late spring to mid-summer. The fragrant flowers have dark indigo-purple petals with yellow-tipped stamens. They occur in dense, upright, 3- to 6-inch spikes, often clustered together, on the upper part of the plant. False indigo bush is long-lived on adapted sites and regenerates from seed or branch layering. Twigs are rigid, glabrous, and red-brown or gray. The fruit is a small, warty, kidney-shaped pod (1/2 inch long), with large glandular dots, in a crowded cylindrical cluster. Fruits persist on the shrub through winter.

#### **Source**

This composite originates from four collections made in in the late fall and early winter of 2000 in the Illinois counties of Marion, Piatt, Champaign, and Vermilion. Each collection was increased vegetatively in the greenhouse and planted into a randomized complete block with four replications. Each plant was evaluated for plant vigor, height, spread, insect and disease resistance and seed production. The final evaluation before release was conducted on July 15, 2003.

#### **Conservation Uses**

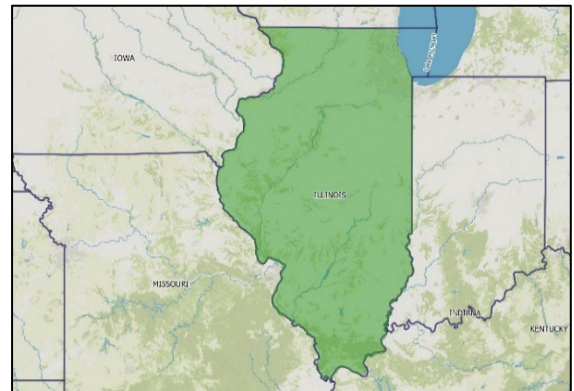
Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush was primarily developed for use in covey headquarters mixes on upland sites. A covey headquarters planting is a small (approximately 1500 square feet) vegetative wildlife cover. In addition to being used for wildlife cover, Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush can also be used to enhance wetland riparian areas and to address erosion along fluctuating shorelines, streams, and wetlands.

#### **Area of Adaptation and Use**

Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush originated from four Illinois counties and is intended for use across the state of Illinois. False indigo bush occurs in moist prairie thickets and along streams and rivers in prairies throughout the tallgrass region. Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush likes full sun or light shade and thrives in moist soils that are poorly drained. It also performs well on silt loams to dry sands.

#### **Establishment and Management of Conservation Plantings**

Wildlife plantings can be established using seed, bareroot, or container plants. Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo can be added to a covey headquarter seeding mix, which is best drilled but can be broadcast and harrowed in an area (1500 ft<sup>2</sup>; 50 ft. x 30 ft.) where the soil has been disturbed or exposed by mechanical preparation for a seedbed. A recommended seeding rate for Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo is 15 lb pure live seed (PLS) per acre, or 0.5 lb PLS for 1500



*Figure 2. Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush is intended for use in the state of Illinois.*

ft.<sup>2</sup> (0.03 acre) for a covey headquarter. During establishment year, use a selective grass post-emergence application herbicide for control of annual and perennial grasses. Consult with the local extension service or Land Grant University for assistance with recommendations on herbicides and application rates. For container plants, reduce weed competition by mowing or weeding around the bases of the establishing plants to reduce shading.

### **Ecological Considerations**

Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush is a composite of naturally occurring germplasm and does not differ in rate or spread, seed production, or vigor from naturally occurring false indigo bush. An environmental evaluation did not indicate any issues with spreading outside of its intended area of conservation use. *Amorpha* borer beetles can lay eggs in the stems of false indigo bush, causing a long swelling near the tip of the stem just below the foliage. It can be pruned off while the tree is dormant. Systemic insecticides have helped prevent future insect damage from occurring at the Elsberry PMC.

### **Seed and Plant Production**

Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush can also be seeded in rows (12 to 15 ft. apart) at a rate of 9 to 12 PLS per linear foot (0.6 to 0.8 PLS lb. per acre). One pound of Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo contains 81,540 seeds. To establish, prepare a weed-free seedbed by disking and harrowing or using chemical weed control for direct seeding. If disking or harrowing is performed, firm the seedbed using a cultipacker or roller before seeding. Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush seed should be planted at a depth of ¼ to ½ inch using a no-till drill or Brillion seeder. These planters will ensure good seed-to-soil contact. Once the seedlings emerge, they should be thinned or spaced out 5 to 8 feet apart within the row to prevent seedling competition. This spacing can be achieved by mowing or clipping the trees when they are still in the sapling stage.

Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush can also be established using container-grown plants. Start plants in germinating trays and transplant to containers filled with standard nursery potting soil. Potted Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush should be at least 8 to 10 inches tall before transplanting to the field. For seed production, plants should be spaced 5 to 8 feet apart within the row and rows should be 12 to 15 feet apart with minimal competing vegetation to provide optimal growing conditions.

### **Availability**

*For conservation use:* Illinois Covey Germplasm false indigo bush is commercially available from Missouri seed growers.

*For seed or plant increase:* G1 material is being produced in limited supply by the Elsberry Plant Materials Center. Contact for availability.

### **For More Information**

Elsberry PMC, 2803 North Hwy 79

Elsberry, Missouri 63343

Phone # 573-898-2012

Website: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/plant-materials/mopmc>



### **Citation**

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For additional information about this and other plants, please contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office, or Conservation District <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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