

## *Mucuna*

Perennial or annual lianes with large pinnate leaves with three leaflets. Stipels present. Flowers large, pale green or purple in Queensland species. Stamens 10, 9 filaments joined in a dorsally split tube, 1 free, 5 larger anthers alternating with 5 shorter ones. Pods large, often covered with irritant hairs.

The genus *Mucuna* also includes the native rainforest liane *M. gigantea*. It is readily distinguishable from *M. pruriens* by its greenish flowers and seeds with a hilum extending for  $\frac{3}{8}$  the circumference. Some species have been used overseas for erosion control.

### *Mucuna pruriens* ssp. *pruriens* var. *utilis*

Velvet bean

Twining annual or weakly perennial vine with stems to 5m long. Young stems densely covered with minute downward-pointing hairs. Stipules 2-3mm long, narrow, very deciduous. Petiole 20-400mm long, rachis 15-30mm long; stipels c. 2.5mm long. Leaflets 45-190mm long, 35-170mm wide, the terminal one broadest below the midpoint, the margins only slightly curving to the bluntly pointed mucronate tip and rounded base. Lateral leaflets the same size as the terminal leaflet, very asymmetrical, deeply rounded along the outer margin in the lower third; all leaflets sparsely to densely covered with adpressed hairs on both surfaces.

Inflorescence a short, pendulous raceme borne on a 20-180mm axillary peduncle. Flowers borne in groups of 1-3 within the axils of very deciduous 7-15mm bracts, each on a stout 1.5-6mm pedicel which bears a pair of very deciduous 7-10mm narrow bracteoles at the tip. Calyx c. 12mm long, covered with short adpressed hairs, the two dorsal sepals totally joined and keeled towards the tip, the sepals otherwise joined for c.  $\frac{1}{2}$  their length. Standard pale purple, c. 20mm long from base of calyx. Wings dark purple, twice the length of the standard. Keel white, shiny, extending c. 5mm beyond the wings. Style covered with soft spreading hairs over most of its length.

Pod 40-90mm long, 10-20mm wide, slightly S-



*Mucuna pruriens* ssp. *pruriens* var. *utilis*, Ingham, 18°33'S, 146°10'E.

shaped, pendulous, prominently ribbed along the sides, densely velvety-hairy, containing 4-5 seeds. Seeds 10-19mm long, 8-13mm wide, oval, black to purple, with a c. 4mm long hilum.

**Distribution:** Co., NK., W.B. A widely cultivated tropical species native to South-East Asia, occasionally naturalized in the wet tropics of Queensland.

**Notes:** Has been popular as a silage or green manure crop. Ingestion by cattle of the hairy pods can result in haemorrhage and even death. A number of varieties and subspecies of *M. pruriens* occur; they differ in flower and seed colour and pod hairiness. Nodulates.

**References:** 3, 16, 46, 121, 141, 306; as velvet bean, 10, 20, 179, 304; as *Stizolobium deeringianum*, 243.

## *Muelleranthus*

Prostrate herbs with long wiry stems and with digitate leaves with three leaflets, lacking stipels. Flowers single, leaf-opposed, yellowish or purple. Stamens 10, the filaments all joined in a dorsally split tube. Style hairless. Pods flattened, containing 4-8 seeds which may have a white, deciduous aril. An endemic Australian genus.

### Key to species

Standard 3-6mm broad  
Standard 9-14mm broad

*M. stipularis*  
*M. trifoliolatus*