

***Amorpha canescens* – Leadplant**

COMMON NAME: Leadplant

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Amorpha canescens* – from the Greek word *amorphous* meaning “deformed” since the flower has only one instead of five petals, and *canescens* from Latin for “generally hoary or whitish” referring to the tiny white hairs.

FLOWER: Tiny deep purple-blue blossoms with only one petal and golden-orange stamens on a terminal spike

BLOOMING PERIOD: Late June to August or even early September

SIZE: One to three feet tall

BEHAVIOR: Leadplant is upright in full sun, but may sprawl in partial sun. It forms several flower spikes that will be densely covered with blossoms. Leadplant often grows in clumps. With its deep roots it rebounds well from fire.

SITE REQUIREMENTS: Prefers a rich and well-drained site, either gravel or sand. Does not do well in wet areas. Tolerates light shade, but blooms best in full sun.

NATURAL RANGE: Central Canada (Ontario and Manitoba) and the central U.S. from southwestern Michigan west to eastern Montana and south to the Gulf coast, Texas and New Mexico. In Wisconsin it is found mostly in the south and west on dry prairies.

SPECIAL FEATURES: Leadplant belongs to the legume family and adds nitrogen to the soil. The leaves are divided into 13-20 pairs of dense silvery leaflets and the stems are covered with tiny white hairs. Although not difficult to grow, it may take three years for a plant to blossom. Seedpods contain a single seed. Light sandpapering before planting enhances germination. Early settlers thought that the plant suggested the presence of lead ore deposits.

SUGGESTED CARE: Water new young plants well and then deep soak established plants every couple of weeks. Young plants need to be protected from rabbits.

COMPANION PLANTS: Flowering spurge, purple prairie clover, whorled milkweed, silky aster, side-oats grama, pale purple coneflower, alumroot, little bluestem, coreopsis, round-headed bushclover, spiderwort, big bluestem, shooting star rattlesnake master, compass plant, and culver’s root.