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**May 2016 Newsletter**

Welcome to [www.vegetableseeds.net.au](http://www.vegetableseeds.net.au) newsletter May 2016.

What goes around comes around.

The following article was co-constructed with Bob Reid, who has offered enormous assistance in this subject.

### **Green manure - Pink Serradella**

Everyone knows the expressions "There is nothing new under the sun" or "what goes round comes round", and so it is with Pink Serradella. No one knows exactly when farmers in the Mediterranean region realised that not only was this plant an excellent forage and hay plant but that wherever it grew subsequent crops that followed had better yields. At that time it is



doubtful if the farmers knew of the value of the associated rhizobia that was found on the roots of the plant and that it was the nitrogen produced by these organisms that enriched the soil. (See below).

### **Origin and History**

The Ancient Romans promoted this plant as an improver of acid, sandy soils and carried it throughout the Empire. Pink, or French as it is sometimes known, Serradella is a legume that is



closely related to Lupins and in the wild is found on sandy soils in such countries as France, Italy and Spain.

It used to be widely sown throughout those parts of the world that have a Mediterranean climate (warm dry summers, cool wet winters) but with the "improvement" of agriculture and the wide use of artificial nitrogen fertiliser it became a minor species.

However with the recognition that agricultural soils were running out of organic matter and that natural nitrogen could be somewhat cost effective, there has been a steadily increasing use of green manures.

In the temperate world species such as Oats, Mustards, Annual Clovers and Lupins are now in use, principally because seed is relatively cheap.

All have advantages and/ or disadvantages namely that they lignify too early and when incorporated into the soil take a long time to breakdown; or in the case of the non-legumes produce insufficient nitrogen.

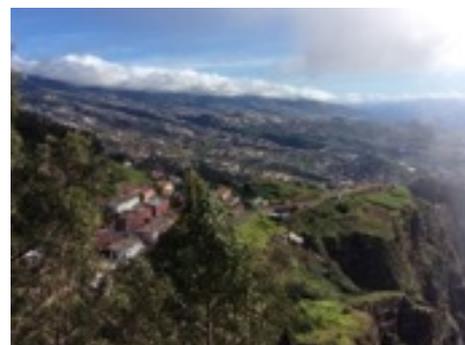
## Description

Pink Serradella is very leafy and when incorporated breaks down quickly, and being a legume produces lots of nitrogen, almost the perfect green manure! However it is not a silver bullet, if you are gardening on poorly drained soil, other species such as the annual clovers may be a better choice.

## Where, when and how to sow

In the cooler parts of Australia such as Tasmania and the elevated regions of Victoria and Southern NSW Pink Serradella can be sown at any time of the year, as long as it is well watered in summer.

For the home gardener a cupful of seed to 4 square meters should be an adequate sowing rate. Germination and emergence will be improved if the seed is lightly raked into the soil and the surface firmed down. If the soil is moist then no other treatment is required, however if the soil is dry then a good soak will be needed. Seedlings should appear within 7 days.



Pink Serradella has what agronomists call "soft seed", that is the seed coat does not need scarification to induce germination, hence all the seed more or less germinates at the same time. This also means that when the plants are incorporated into the soil, usually at flowering time, there will be no residual seed left to germinate thus ensuring a clean bed for the next and subsequent crop.

## What they do

One of the most important features of this species is that being a legume it has a symbiotic relationship with soil bacteria from the genus *Rhizobium*. Put simply these organisms are able to capture Nitrogen from the atmosphere and supply it to the plant through the method of root nodules. There are however many species of *Rhizobium* and each legume species has its own strain.

Some legumes are promiscuous and can virtually use any form of *Rhizobium*, others are highly specific and must have their individual strain in order to work.

Fortunately Pink Serradella, being related to Lupins, will utilise the same strain. So if Lupins have been planted and grown successfully in the past there is a fair chance that the soil has been suitably infected. If growing for the first time then it pays to either inoculate (see photo of example inoculant available from specialist agricultural suppliers) or buy the seed already coated.



This latter method is the most convenient for the home gardener.

Pre-inoculated seed can be obtained from Inspirations Garden Centre. Seeds that are not used in the first year can be stored in a cool dry place so they can be sown in subsequent years into soil that has already been infected.

## Climate

It is worth noting that the cultivar Serratas is well adapted to Tasmanian conditions. Originally probably from the cooler regions of Spain but introduced into Australia from Southern Patagonia. No wonder it is at home under cool conditions.



The name Serratas has a combination of the words Serradella and Tasmania in it. This is to indicate to growers that it has protected rights as a named

cultivar by the company that owns those rights. This is an excellent green manure for farmers and home gardeners alike, and once again it is in circulation.

We have Pink Serradella seeds available on our web catalogue, and at Inspirations Garden Centre.

Sow broad beans now.



Try our rarer cultivars grown by us at Cressy for sale through our Garden Centre and web site. These include Paramo, Red Epicure, Green seeded purple flowered and a new cultivar called Karmazyn which has pink seed. The last is not in our catalogue yet so please ask if you would like this one by email \$4 for 20 seeds.

Plant garlic now. Sow our onions now.



The window for sowing our cultivars is from April to mid-May, not the shortest day because our cultivars will not form bulbs by harvest time if sown then.

About mid-June we will have punnets available and in late August bundles for planting, grown by The Northern Support School all from the same seeds. So you won't miss out.

Regrettably we did not attend AGFEST this year due to adverse weather conditions, this was disappointing because we were looking forward to meeting many of you again, these things happen in horticulture.

Remember postage is still **FREE**.

**Enjoy your garden wherever you may be.**

