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Forum: plants

Growing kudzu

Paula Edwards
Posts: 411

posted 5 years ago



I've found a source where I can buy a kudzu plant. Who grows kudzu? It seems to be a fascinating plant and it can be used as animal fodder too.

Does Kudzu grow well in shade?
If you let it climb onto something, must it be sturdy?
How many tubers does the vine produce and do you use this as fodder too?

Posts: 4

posted 5 years ago



Kudzu is an invasive exotic weed. It will take over an area, including climbing and eventually starving trees and other plants by covering them entirely. While goats will eat it, it is practically impossible to eradicate. I personally would advise against ever planting kudzu. Just my 2 cents! 😊

Emerson White
Posts: 1206
Location: Alaska

posted 5 years ago



If you are somewhere hot and humid do not plant kudzu, it will eat your whole property, and become a pest for everyone in your area. If you are up somewhere like boston Kudzu is a great plant to plant.

Posts: 33

posted 5 years ago



It is said in Atlanta that you have to move a parked car every couple of hours to keep the kudzu from taking it over.

I've seen photos of Kudzu that has attacked buildings by going through open windows.

If it gets cold enough in the winter kudzu will die back to the ground, but the roots w always survive to sprout again in the spring.

paul wheaton
master steward

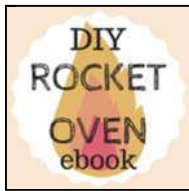
posted 5 years ago



I've heard that it takes a couple of years for kudzu to get established.

Posts: 20106
Location: missoula, montana (zone 4)

Once established, it makes an excellent fodder and people can eat it too!



I like...

Posts: 43
Location: Ozarks

Emerson White
Posts: 1206
Location: Alaska

paul wheaton
master steward

Posts: 20106
Location: missoula,
montana (zone 4)

I like...

Emerson White
Posts: 1206
Location: Alaska

Paula Edwards
Posts: 411

I've heard that when you are ready to get rid of it, bring pigs in - they love it so much they will wipe it out completely.

I think it could very well be a permaculture miracle plant.

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posted 5 years ago

2

OH NO! DON'T PLANT KUDZU!!

posted 5 years ago

It is miraculous if you use it. If you don't then it does blanket everything and kills all native plant life. It turns every field into a giant monoculture. It turns every forest into a giant monoculture.

posted 5 years ago

+1 + Quote Reply

I suspect that in the north it will be a poorly performing annual.

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posted 5 years ago

+1 + Quote Reply

It grows as a perennial in all of new england and everything to the south or the west of nebraska, as well as washington and oregon. But as I said, hot and humid=monoculture. I remember visiting my father in Alabama and seeing just a littl plant climbing up a telephone pole when I arrived (literally5 vines creeping maybe 6' up a pole), then a few months later as I was leaving seeing an area of mixed forest th size of a football field covered. came back four years later and all the trees had rotte (or been eaten by termites) and fallen to the ground, and it was just a field of kudzu. These were not small trees either, 60-80 foot tall oak trees, about 18" thick at chest hight. Kudzu is so aggressive that it smothers bindweed and blackberry brambles.

What kida sucks is that no one can make a business out of cutting the vines down an feeding them to cows because it is illegal to transport in most of the south. It would probably create a moral hazard, but still it would be turning two problems into one solution.

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=PUMOL>

posted 5 years ago

+1 + Quote Reply

Our climate is cool temperate and it would not die down in winter but we're not hot and humid. So I don't really think it becomes a pest here.
I wonder if I either grow the kudzu directly, where the sheep have access, then it might be difficult harvesting the roots or they don't let it grow at all. Or I harvest the stuff manually and throw it over the fence.

Paula Edwards
Posts: 411

posted 5 years ago



You could make a business digging up the roots as here in the health food shop kudzu root powder is sold. Maybe it is legal if you transport the vines after drying them as kudzu hay?

Does kudzu grow in winter?
Do you need to restrict root growth? A root barrier or is a raised bed sufficient?

Emerson White
Posts: 1206
Location: Alaska

posted 5 years ago



Illegal to transport or possess any part of the plant, presumably you could get away with powdered root, but there is no way you could get away with live roots or hay. Th seeds are very small. What state are you in, if I may ask?

maikeru sumi-e
Posts: 313

posted 5 years ago



I would think twice about kudzu, the vine that ate the South.

Posts: 148

posted 5 years ago



Kudzu roots are way too deep for pigs to eradicate. 4-5 feet in the ground if it's soft enough. I have wondered about it tho if it was planted in a large container with no way for the roots to get out, then surrounded by goat pasture or rabbit hutches. It doesn't set blooms until it climbs up on something and the seeds are small beans.

Paula Edwards
Posts: 411

posted 5 years ago



New South Wales Australia.

Posts: 18

posted 5 years ago



If you do decide to grow it, here's how to plant it.

- 1: Pour a concrete slab about 1 foot in diameter and 6 inches deep.
- 2: After curing, poor used motor oil on the concrete until it has absorbed all it can.
- 3: Take one kudzu seed and cut it into as many pieces as possible.
- 4: Place the smallest piece you have in the center of the concrete.

5: Stand back.

Neal McSpadden

Posts: 269

posted 5 years ago



As someone who lives in the South, I can tell you that planting kudzu is playing with fire. Yes, livestock will eat it. Yes, you can powder the root for use in traditional Japanese medicine. Yes, there have been studies that show that taking kudzu root can help with breaking alcohol addiction. Yes, you can compost it. Yes, it will hold soil against erosion (the original purpose for importing it).

But!

It also kills entire forests, covers houses, and is a constant battle to keep in check.

Check out my [Primal Prepper](#) blog where I talk about permaculture, prepping, and the primal lifestyle... all the time! 😊

paul wheaton

master steward

Posts: 20106

Location: missoula, montana (zone 4)

∞

I like...



posted 5 years ago



About ten years ago I looked into trying kudzu on a northern mountain. In the end, I switched my thinking to lablab - but tried neither.

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paul wheaton

master steward

Posts: 20106

Location: missoula, montana (zone 4)

∞

I like...



posted 5 years ago



Oh, and perfectly aligned with a lot of the concerns here: I heard from a lot of people in the south that were surrounded by an ocean of kudzu, but they had very little on their property - probably because they had animals that ate it. It sounded like a permaculture story: the problem wasn't too much kudzu, but not enough animals to eat it.

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[gardening videos](#) / [my youtube videos](#) / [my podcasts](#) / [wood heat videos](#)

Neal McSpadden

Posts: 269

posted 5 years ago



I've actually been thinking about this as a permaculture business over the last few years. Here in the South, people pay to have kudzu removed. I could offer free cleanup, feed it to rabbits, chickens, and goats, and vermicompost the rest.

One of about 30 different business ideas I have thought that I don't have time for.

Check out my [Primal Prepper](#) blog where I talk about permaculture, prepping, and the primal lifestyle... all the time! 😊

Emerson White

Posts: 1206

posted 5 years ago



Location: Alaska

tamo42 wrote:

I've actually been thinking about this as a permaculture business over the last few years. Here in the South, people pay to have kudzu removed. I could offer free cleanup, feed it to rabbits, chickens, and goats, and vermicompost the rest.

One of about 30 different business ideas I have though that I don't have time for.

You gotta take the goats to the kudzu because it is illegal to take the kudzu to the goats, or anywhere.

Edible cities, <http://www.northcoastweeds.org.au/site-files/docs/forum04/kudzu-turnbull.pdf>

Neal McSpadden

Posts: 269

posted 5 years ago



Emerson White wrote:

You gotta take the goats to the kudzu because it is illegal to take the kudzu to the goats, or anywhere.

Edible cities, <http://www.northcoastweeds.org.au/site-files/docs/forum04/kudzu-turnbull.pdf>

Right, it would depend on your local laws.

Check out my [Primal Prepper](#) blog where I talk about permaculture, prepping, and the primal lifestyle... all the time! 😊

Leila Rich

steward

Posts: 3999

Location:
Wellington, New Zealand.
Temperate, coastal,
sandy, windy,

88

posted 5 years ago



As far as I know, we don't have it in NZ. yet...but there's plenty of other fantastically opportunistic introduced plants taking advantage of niches in our unique ecosystem! Kudzu may be an ideal permaculture plant in an ideal world, but you won't be round to control it forever.

Emerson White

Posts: 1206

Location: Alaska

posted 5 years ago



Leila wrote:

[Y]ou won't be round to control it forever.

Fantastic point!

Paula Edwards

Posts: 411

posted 5 years ago



Thanks for the Australian link! I don't really think that it will become weedy here as it is a problem only in Northern NSW and SE QLD which is a much warmer climate than we are. They are subtropical and we are cool temperate and get frost in winter up to

-5°C and our summers aren't very hot either.
I still could grow the plant in a pot though.

insipidtoast McCoy

Posts: 38

posted 5 years ago



[innappropriate stuff deleted by paul]

this amazing plant.

I've called the USDA and confirmed the following:
It is NOT a federally listed invasive, and it is NOT listed on California's state list either I can take it across state lines. It might just be the perfect plant. I found someone in the south who sent me three plants in a box. Also, the USDA gave me 50 seeds as part of their germplasm program.

The following is based on the three 5 gallon plants growing in my bedroom with an east-facing window:
Urine seems to effectively control its growth. Of the two plants that I peed on, both wilted and eventually lost all their foliage. Over one month later I am waiting for a sign of regrowth. The third plant received no urigation and grew from ground height to the ceiling in three weeks! Talk about lightning fast carbon pathways! Keep in mind this is a VERY low light-level condition. The plant receives no direct sunlight, and only filtered artificial light. The leaves look wonderful despite this, and maybe only slightly etiolated.
The texture of even small leaves is disagreeable to the throat, so I recommend juicing the foliage. Not a bad taste at all (Very similar to wheatgrass).

I look forward to eating the roots of these plants while you're waiting in a bread line.

P.S. For those concerned about killing the plant. 1. get goats to consume all the foliage as well as new seedlings the next few years. 2. Remove the root crown. The root crown is all that needs to be removed, NOT the entire root.

Paula Edwards

Posts: 411

posted 5 years ago



I could then grow it in a completely shady spot. Whack a star post in and tether a sheep there. I actually do not want to eat the leaves, unless I haven't got anything else. It seems to be the ideal stock food.

Suzy Bean

pollinator
Posts: 940
Location:
Stevensville, MT

posted 5 years ago



toby hemenway, author of Gaia's Garden shares about kudzu and other invasives in this podcast with Paul: <http://www.richsoil.com/permaculture/367-podcast-053-toby-hemenway-native-plants/>

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www.thehappypermaculturalist.wordpress.com

Paula Edwards

Posts: 411

posted 5 years ago



this kudzu plant sits still in a big pot and I don't know if it survived the winter. No signs of leaving out so far. It's not invasive here I reckon.

ellen kardl

posted 5 years ago



Posts: 50

Having seen firsthand the damage this plant does, I'd advise against it. I don't know what zone you're in, but it *loves* zone 7. As a matter of fact, I've seriously investigated doing a goat based eradication business in DC, but I'm too far from the DC beltway (big bad problem, and my target area) to bring them in every day, in terms of the gas cost.

Kirk Hutchison

Posts: 418
Location: Los Angeles, CA

posted 5 years ago



I don't think kudzu is capable of invading mature ecosystems. Whenever I go to the south I see it along the edges of roads or in pine forests that look like they were logged within the last 20 years or so. When I walk deeper into the forest, no kudzu.

[Paleo Gardener Blog](#)

Abe Connally

Posts: 1502
Location: Chihuahua Desert

posted 4 years ago



sorry for reviving an old thread, but I am interested in this topic. I have heard that kudzu requires water, so is anyone growing it in the west/southwest? We have 9 months of dry season here, and sometimes even the cactus die, so unless someone was keeping it watered, it would definitely die back.

So, I'm wondering, would it survive the dry period to grow another year, or would I have to keep it watered to survive? If I could just grow it in the wet season, the pigs could clean it up when it weak during winter/dry season.

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Max Kennedy

Posts: 478
Location: Kirkland Lake, Ontario, Canada

posted 4 years ago



here's an image link, houses, cars, buses, trees and god knows what else is under there. This is another asian carp but for the plant kingdom. No matter how careful you are at some point it WILL get away. This is not an appropriate permaculture resource as using it fails the "take RESPONSIBILITY" principle. When, not if, it gets away from you will you and your children and grandchildren ad infinitum dedicate their lives and fortunes to removing what they can of it from the region you contaminated? Unless Kudzu is native to your area and the natural checks/balances exist in the environment this is a very BAD idea!

<https://www.google.ca/search?q=kudzu&hl=en&client=firefox-a&hs=6NT&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&prmd=imvns&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=-85nT7zIEsfGQf-9IimCQ&ved=0CF4QsAQ&biw=1366&bih=614>

It can be done!

Abe Connally

Posts: 1502
Location: Chihuahua Desert

posted 4 years ago



Max,

If I thought it could get away or even grow here, I wouldn't use it. But, we are in the Chihuahuan desert, and even the cactus suffer. I don't know if it will even grow here without me watering the heck out of it.

What I am thinking is that arid areas might be appropriate, as the lack of rainfall can keep it in check.

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Max Kennedy

Posts: 478
 Location: Kirkland Lake, Ontario, Canada

1

posted 4 years ago



That is the kind of reasoning that has resulted in cane toads in Australia, boa's in the everglades, africanised bee's and asian carp in the mississippi. Living things have a greater capacity to adapt than we give them credit for. Oh well it's your area but I wouldn't if I were you.

It can be done!

Abe Connally

Posts: 1502
 Location: Chihuahua Desert

posted 4 years ago



well, I would argue that those invasions came from inappropriate introduction, rather than appropriate placement. If you plant an invasive species that requires 50 inches of rain a year to thrive, in an area that receives 12 inches of rain, I doubt it will be invasive in that area.

I know it is hard to think of planting something so invasive, but if it doesn't have a niche to exploit, it ceases to be invasive. I doubt kudzu does well on Antarctica, either.

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Andrew Ray

Posts: 162
 Location: Slovakia

1

posted 4 years ago



What about USDA zone 4, 10" precipitation a year, around Laramie, Wyoming?

My grandmother lives on a ranch there, and while there is an irrigated hayfield as well as aspen forest, the rest of the area is pretty much just sagebrush with a soil that isn't so much a soil as it is fine gravel.

I've been thinking that if kudzu were planted it would create a good ground cover, then die off completely in the winter and the remains of the vines could help hold soil. Possibly it could be grazed as well during the summer.

Someday I'll have to go out there and try the experiment...

James Colbert

Posts: 270

9

posted 4 years ago



One thing I have not heard mentioned in this thread is containing kudzu and other invasive species for that matter with water. I'm thinking of either an island in the middle of a pond or a Chinampa. You could use a ferry to transport goats, cows, chickens, etc. to the island and allow them to feed in a paddock shift type of system. With a plant like kudzu you could probably greatly increase herd densities. On top of that the vine makes a high quality basket weaving material, the roots can be dried and powdered for export to Japan, and the biomass, my god the biomass. So properly managed it could be responsibly used (for all those concerned about future

generations being overrun by kudzu). Some questions that should be answered for proper design include: how does it propagate? Will wind carry the seeds? Birds? Can we keep it from flowering simply by not allowing it to climb? Can planned climbing (post driven in the ground) help the health of the plant and allow for easy culling of undesirable flowers? Further we can make the commitment that if it does escape we are setup to remove it ideally using animals and then digging up the root crowns. If it stays contained on the island great, if not we have a plan of attack to prevent long term problems. What do you guys/gals think? Should we be afraid of a plant because of an ignorant/ irresponsible application of it to an ecosystem?

Max Kennedy

Posts: 478
Location: Kirkland Lake, Ontario, Canada

1

posted 4 years ago



James, this type of thinking is a recipe for disaster. It takes only 1 flower where the seeds are eaten by a bird and they fly to the "mainland" and do what comes natural for the problem to escape. Talk with someone in a place this has happened and they will tell you how hard and expensive it is to eradicate. It isn't a matter of "if" this will happen but when! People thinking they can outsmart mother nature is simply a recipe for disaster. To use plants like this goes against the principle of caring for the earth in permaculture. The folks farming Asian Carp thought the same thing, we're isolated from local lakes and rivers so they can't get out. Now they've almost reached the great lakes and if they do what a disaster that is! Kudzu in it's own way is as bad. In a word DON'T! My 2 cents worth but I've seen human hubris backfire so many times when it turns out we can't control everything in the way we think we can that taking chances like that is just selfish. Not trying to be rude or offend but speaking from experience.

It can be done!

wayne stephen steward

Posts: 1793
Location: Western Kentucky-Climate Unpredictable Zone 6b

104

posted 4 years ago



I live in rural Kentucky - I am planting nettles , I allow thistles to grow , lesperdanza , Wild carrot - lovely weeds. I would NOT want to be on a WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE poster for bringing in kudzu ! Goats or no goats . Thats just me.

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