

TRUE RED CRANBERRY BEAN

Shell Bean, Shellouts, Borlotti, French Horticultural Bean

Phaseolus vulgaris

Leguminosae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

The True Red Cranberry Bean is deep red in color like a cranberry but the pod is ivory with red flecks. It is a pole bean that blossoms and sets pods over the course of a growing season. Beans from this species serve as a major protein source for humans. True Red Cranberry Bean was first grown in South America and Latin America but is now common in the tropics, subtropics, temperate regions and is increasing in popularity in East Africa. It is very popular in Italy and Spain

Uses

The True Red Cranberry Bean can be eaten by humans as either a fresh, green vegetable or a dried cooked pulse. When the pods swell but have not yet dried, the beans inside are called horticultural or shelly beans, Cranberry Beans are usually grown for this stage.

Common Names

Cultivation

A useful trait of this variety is the ability to make good growth when planted in a corn field using the corn stalks as stakes. The True Red Cranberry Bean should be direct-seeded as it does not transplant well. It will succeed at high altitudes with a cool growing season. The plants are hardy and pods easy to shell. One variety trial yielded 50 # of beans harvested from a 100 ft double row. At lower elevations, it is best to plant during the cool-dry season.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In the tropics, True Red Cranberry Bean produces mature seeds ready to be picked 60-65 days from planting. When 80% of the pods on a plant are bulging with seeds and the pods begin to dry on the vine, plants may be uprooted, tied in bunches and thoroughly air-dried in the shade for 7-10 days. Threshing is done by beating the plants with a stick or trampling them in heaps. The beans need to have a moisture level below 12% for storage. An easy test is to bite the bean itself. If an indentation remains, more drying is necessary. On a dry day, harvest the seeds and store the beans in covered baskets, earthen pots, metal drums or tightly woven sacks. Beans may be stored for up to three years to be used for human consumption or seed.

Pests and Diseases

Because of its climbing characteristic, if trellised, it will not be subjected to diseases caused by the surface of the ground beneath always being moist and shaded. There can be many problems associated with storage of dry beans such as moisture uptake, weevils, beetles and toxic molds. Larvae of the common bean weevil tunnel into the beans where they grow and hatch out. Adult females then lay a quantity of eggs among the stored beans. A unique method of ridding the beans of the eggs, larvae and adult beetles is to tumble the beans vigorously twice each day in their storage containers. This action kills by smashing or exhaustion of the larvae. Another method is to coat the beans lightly with an edible oil. Anthracnose is a common disease of cranberry bean plants when they are cultivated in wet weather.

Cooking and Nutrition

This bean variety is considered to have a creamy, chestnut-like flavor, low in fat, high in calcium, phosphorus and iron, and is 22% protein. Like other colored beans, true, True Red Cranberry Bean may contain more antioxidants and folate than all other beans. In northern Italy and Spain, True Red Cranberry Beans are added to soup and stews though their color pales when cooked. In the growing season when the beans are still tender, they may be eaten as a vegetable removed from the pods. The reputation of beans causing gas in the intestines is quite true but pre-soaking and changing the cooking water twice will get rid of some of the indigestible complex sugars that cause the discomfort.