

YARDLONG BEAN

Asparagus Bean, Yard Long Bean, Snake Bean, Dow Gauk

Vigna unguiculata subsp. sesquipedalis

Fabaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Yardlong beans are an annual, vining or bushy, subspecies of Cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*) that produce elongated pods up to 1 m long. Green pods and seeds are eaten as a fresh vegetable and the plants are also used as fodder, green manure, or cover crop.

Origin

Asparagus Beans/Yard Long Beans probably originated in southern China.

Uses

The Yardlong Bean is reported to be one of the top ten vegetables in Southeast Asia, especially in Taiwan, southern China, and Bangladesh. It is the most widely grown legume of the Philippines where it is known as "poor man's meat." Bush Sitao (a cross between Yardlong Bean and Cowpea) reportedly is replacing Yardlong Bean as a favorite in the Philippines. It is bush-shaped, doesn't need a trellis, and is less susceptible to wind damage than Yardlong Bean. Yardlong Bean has been introduced to many lowland tropical countries where often it is a minor garden vegetable. It has become popular in the Caribbean and is grown as a summer crop in California and in parts of Europe, especially as a greenhouse vegetable.

Common Names

- French
 - haricot kilomètre
 - dolique asperge
- Spanish
 - Frijol Espárrago
 - De Yarda
- Tagalog
 - Sitao
 - Sitaw
 - Sit
- Indonesian
 - Kacang panjang
 - Kacang tolo
 - Kacang belut
- Malay
 - Kacang bélut
 - Kacang panjang

Cultivation

Yardlong Beans are annual plants propagated by seeds. To germinate well the soil should be warm (20-22°C/68-72°F) at planting, otherwise the seeds likely will rot.

Yardlong Beans thrive in hot humid climates. Environments with full sunlight attaining daytime temperatures of 25-35°C (77-95°F) with nighttime temperatures not falling below 15°C (59°F) are preferred. Yardlong Beans will grow and produce poorly in the mid-elevation tropics or in temperate climates.

Yardlong Beans are climbers. Plant in hills or in rows for pole or trellis growth. Newer bush varieties do not require trellis or pole constructions, however.

Thin hills of 5-6 seedlings to 3 plants per pole after emergence. Provide loose nutrient-rich soil. Fertilize with a balanced fertilizer as needed but avoid the use of high-nitrogen fertilizers that will encourage excessive vine and foliage growth but retard flower and fruit production.

A short-day plant, yard long bean is best planted during the period of decreasing day-length. It will typically flower and form pods after the rainy season.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Yardlong Beans begin flower production 5 weeks after planting; fruit production begins 2 weeks later in warm humid climates. Harvest pods frequently (at least weekly). Pick the pods while they're still tender before the seeds fill out the pods. Older pods become tough and unsuitable for eating. Matured pods contain reddish-brown seeds that may be sun-dried on racks for storage.

Pests and Diseases

Yardlong Beans are damaged by rust and mildew diseases as well as by cowpea virus diseases such as cowpea aphid-borne mosaic virus and cowpea witches' broom virus. Virus control is aided by destroying infected plant materials and by control of aphids, whiteflies, leafhoppers and beetles that serve as virus vectors. Yardlong Beans often are relatively pest-free compared to Green Bean varieties; however, the bean shoot fly and the bean pod fly may hamper plant growth and pod production. Remove and burn damaged plant materials to prevent spread of pest species.

Cooking and Nutrition

Yardlong Bean is grown chiefly for the long immature pods that resemble French green beans in flavor. The raw pods reportedly have a mushroom-like flavor. Some users claim an asparagus flavor for them, as reflected by the name, "Asparagus Bean." The mature seeds may be dried for storage and later cooked as a pulse. Young leaves and stem tips are eaten steamed as a vegetable.

References

<http://ecocrop.fao.org/ecocrop/srv/en/cropView?id=10834>