

# VEGETABLE LABLAB

*Lablab purpureus*

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## ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

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### Uses

Lablab is a nitrogen fixer. However, the annual field varieties of lablab are mainly used as green manure cover crops for soil improvement.

Although vegetable lablab is primarily for vegetable production, the vines can possibly be used as livestock fodder.

### Common Names

### Cultivation

Vegetable lablab is often planted during the early to late rainy season. In Thailand, the plants begin flowering indeterminately in November with green pods harvested from December to March. Lablab plants can be kept for a second year, beginning to yield again the following July with production lasting through March. Garden varieties require better conditions than the field varieties of lablab; in India they are manured heavily, irrigated frequently, and provided supports for climbing. Although lablab is drought-resistant, the crop requires good soil moisture when being established. Along supports (e.g., garden fences), establish lablab at least 1m (3 ft.) apart. Lablab is self-fertilized but cross-pollination is known to occur. Lablab is remarkably adaptable, growing in various climates and regions with annual rainfall ranging from 200 to 2,500 mm (8–98 in) and elevations ranging from sea level to 2,133 m (7,000 ft). Ideal temperatures for vegetable lablab production range from 22 to 35C (72–95F). It can tolerate light shade. Vegetable lablab can grow in many types of soils with the pH varying from 4.4 to 7.8.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

*Seed to Seed* describes lablab as difficult to shell. Farmers in northern Thailand shell large amounts of lablab seeds by placing the mature, dry pods in sacks and beating them with sticks until the seeds fall away from the broken pods. Such threshing is followed by hand cleaning of the seeds and winnowing. Bruchid insects must be controlled during storage. Under cool, dry conditions the seeds will remain viable for at least two years.

### Pests and Diseases

Tropical Forages (Cook et al., 2005) states that the pod-boring insects, *Adisura atkinsoni*, *Exelastis atomosa* and *Maruca testulalis*, can reduce lablab seed yields. Other lablab insect pests include Bruchid beetles (*Callosobruchus* spp.) which damage seed during growth and storage, as well as the caterpillar *Heliothis armigera*. Additionally, lablab roots are attacked by several nematodes: *Helicotylenchus dihystrera*, *Meloidogyne hapla* and *M. incognita*. Anthracnose (caused by *Colletotrichum lindemuthianum*), leaf-spot (caused by *Cercospora dolichii*) and powdery mildew (caused by *Leveillula tauricava* var. *macrospora*) have been reported.

### Cooking and Nutrition

Young pods and tender beans are popular vegetables throughout Asia and beyond, prepared and consumed in a variety of ways (e.g., included in curries and used to dip chilisauce and curries). According to Gowda, in India, young leaves are eaten raw in salads and older leaves are cooked like spinach (2009). Additionally, flowers are eaten raw or steamed, whereas the large starchy root tubers can be boiled and baked. The immature seeds can be boiled and eaten, with mature seeds made into tofu, fermented for tempeh, or used to make bean sprouts. Gowda recommends that dried seeds be boiled in two changes of water before eating since they contain toxins (cyanogenic glucosides) (2009). He also warns that raw dry seeds are poisonous and can cause vomiting and even convulsions and unconsciousness.

### References

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