

# PIGEON PEA

*Cajanus cajan*

Fabaceae

## ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET



The Pigeon Pea probably originated in tropical Africa but is now popular in SE Asia, the Caribbean, east and west Africa and the tropics of the U.S. It is a shrubby, drought-tolerant, fast-growing legume with a long tap root and a mass of fibrous roots. It can grow up to 4 m (13 ft) in height but is not tolerant to low temperatures or frost.



The value of raising Pigeon Peas is that they will produce a vegetable crop of green peas in edible pods as well as a pulse (dry bean) when other garden plants won't. It also functions as a nitrogen-fixing cover/forage crop, as erosion control, as shade for other vegetables and herbs and the dry stalks can be burned or used as thatch or in weaving baskets.



- English
  - Pigeon Pea
  - Gandules
  - Congo Pea
  - Angola Pea
  - Pwa Kongo
  - Gandur
  - Cachito
  - Ambrevade
  - Gungo Pea
- French
  - pois cajan
  - pois d'angole
  - pois congo
  - pois pigeon
- Spanish
  - Gandul Pigeon Pea
  - Frijol De Palo
  - Guisante De Angola
  - Frijol De La India
  - Frijol Quinchancho
  - Quinchoncho



- Elevation: up to 2000 m (9,000 ft)
- Rainfall: Rarely needs irrigation, can survive on as little as 100 mm (4 in) of rain and up to 1000 mm.(40 in)
- Soil Types: Tolerates poor soils with low fertility, pH 5.5-6.5, well-drained
- Temperature Range: 20-30° C ( 68-86° F) or if well watered, can grow in 35° C (95° F) heat.
- Day Length Sensitivity: Tall cultivars with long growth periods like short days



At the beginning of the rainy season, plant 2-4 seeds per hole, spaced 1 m (3 ft) apart, in rows 1 m (3 ft) apart. Thin seedlings to 1 per hole. Pigeon Peas are often interplanted one row for 3-5 rows of primary crops. Remove competing weeds while plants are small. Later, the Pigeon Peas provide their own weed control by shading out competitors. The first harvest of green peas for shelling can be expected 4-6 months after sowing just before the pods lose their bright green color. This early crop will need to be hand harvested but harvesting the later, mature pods can be done with a sickle when they are brown. Pods should be sun-dried, out of the rain for 4-6 days, then put in a sack and threshed to remove pods. Seed production is at its best in the first two years but after that the plants can still be pruned regularly and the leaves used as forage for cattle and goats.



Pigeon Pea generally is resistant to root knot nematodes. The caterpillars of several moths can cause pod and seed damage. Many of these can be controlled by shaking the larvae off the plants, collecting them in a sheet that is dragged along the ground and then feeding the larvae to chickens. In humid weather, leaf spot fungi and downy mildews may lead to leaf shedding.



The green Pigeon Pea is higher in digestible protein than the dry pulse form but the pulse is one of the best legume sources of iron. (15 mg/100g.)  
Mature, dried seeds should be soaked overnight, then cooked 2-3 hours until soft. Onion, garlic, tomatoes, peppers and spices are added and served over cooked rice