

Cajanus cajan

Papilionoideae

Probably north-eastern Africa

Eng: Pigeon pea

- Ecology:** This is a hardy, widely adaptable crop growing on a variety of soils if not waterlogged or saline and it is drought resistant, 1,000-2,400 m. One of the most important grain legumes in the world although it is grown almost exclusively for domestic consumption, mostly in India. The species is being introduced to Eritrea, and it is undergoing seed multiplication.
- Uses:** **Firewood, food (seeds)**, fodder (leaves and pods), bee forage, basket work (stems), nitrogen fixation, soil **improvement, soil conservation**, windbreak, mulch.
- Description:** A slender shrub 2-5 m, annual or perennial, becoming woody with age. Thick stems ribbed and densely pubescent. **LEAVES: Trifoliate, leaflets hairy, silver below**, 2-8 cm long. **FLOWERS:** Usually yellow, **in terminal groups**, the large petal has red lines outside, buds yellow, sticky. **FRUIT:** Straight or upcurved pods, to 10 cm long, sticky and hairy with 4-5 yellow-green-grey **seeds** inside.
- Propagation:** Direct sowing, seedlings.
- Seed:** Seed highly susceptible to insect attack.
- treatment:** Soak in water for 12 hours.
- storage:** Seed stores well if kept dry, cool and insect free.
- Management:** Fast growing. Weeding.
- Remarks:** A useful, high-yielding crop for dry areas which may produce pods over 4-5 years, but it is susceptible to many pests and diseases. Improved perennial "tree-types" are available. It is cultivated for its edible seeds but is also an important plant in soil and water conservation. Suitable as hedges along the contours.

