

Cajanus cajan

Fabaceae



S.E. Asia

Am: *Yergib ater, Yewof ater*

Eng: *Pigeon pea*

Hd: *Gitea*

Ks: *Farengota, Ohota*

Nur: *Ades*

Sm: *Salboko-ghed*

Wt: *Kafo atara, Kafwa ateriya*

Ecology

This is a hardy, widely adaptable and drought resistant crop growing in a variety of soils if not waterlogged or saline.

Cultivated in tropical Africa and America and a great deal in India. An important crop in Ethiopia, cultivated in Dry and Moist Kolla, Weyna Dega and Dega agroclimatic zones of Gonder, Gojam, Shoa, Harerge, Kefa, Gamo Gofa and Sidamo, 1,000–2,400 m.

Uses

Firewood, food (seed), fodder (leaves and pods), bee forage, basket work (stems), mulch, nitrogen fixation, soil improvement, soil conservation, windbreak.

Description

A slender shrub 2–5 m, annual or perennial, becomes 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 at site.

Seed

The pods are picked when the seed has reached maturity and is just beginning to lose its bright green colour. Seed highly susceptible to insect attack; may already be damaged in the pods. Up to 15,000 seeds per kg. Germination in 2–3 weeks after sowing.

Treatment: Germinates readily, treatment not necessary.

Storage: Seed stores well if kept dry, cool and insect-free. The seed are, however, very susceptible to attack by weevils. Add ash if seed is to be stored.

Management

Fast growing. Regular weeding. May be grown as a pure stand or with other crops.

Remarks

A useful, high-yielding crop for dry areas, which may produce fruit over 4–5 years, but it is susceptible to many pests and diseases. Improved perennial “tree types” are available. It can be used as a contour hedge in erosion control.



Photo: Patrick Maundu



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