

**Cajanus cajan**

## Fabaceae (Papilionaceae)

**South East Asia**

**COMMON NAMES:** **Digo:** Mbalazi; **Chonyi:** Mbalazi (fruit), Mubalazi; **Embu:** Muchugu, Njugu (seeds); **English:** Pigeonpea, Catjang, Red gram, Congo pea; **Giriama:** Mbalazi; **Kamba:** Musuu, Nzuu (fruit); **Kambe:** Mbalazi (fruit), Mubalazi; **Kikuyu:** Njugu; **Kisii:** Mbaazi; **Luo:** Mbas; **Marakwet:** Njugu; **Meru:** Nangu, Nchugu; **Sanya:** Mbalazi; **Swahili:** Mbaazi; **Taita:** Chugu; **Teso:** Epana; **Tharaka:** Njugu.

**DESCRIPTION:** A slender annual or perennial shrub, usually 2–3 m tall, occasionally to 5 m, becoming woody with age. Branches ascending, drooping with age as they are weighed down by flowers and fruits. **BARK:** Green or dark red with pale longitudinal lines. **LEAVES:** Each with 3 leaflets covered with glands. Upper surface soft, dark green; paler and hairy white below, 2–8 cm long. Veins prominent beneath. **FLOWERS:** In terminal or axillary groups, yellow to dark red, the large petal with reddish brown lines. **FRUIT:** Pods to 10 cm long, straight or slightly curved with hairy surface with glands, green, often streaked red, dark brown or purplish black. Seeds up to 9 (commonly 5–6) per pod, green, turning cream or light brown on drying.

**ECOLOGY:** A hardy, widely adaptable crop growing on a variety of soils if not saline or waterlogged. Drought resistant. Cultivated in tropical Africa and America and a great deal in India. Important in many parts of Kenya, especially in Murang'a, Kirinyaga, Embu, Meru, Machakos, Kitui and Makueni Districts. Also in the Kerio Valley, West Pokot, southern Turkana and in Nyanza Province, 0–1,800 m. Does best in semi-arid to subhumid areas. Occasionally found as an escapee on waste ground. Not soil demanding and can grow in moderately acid as well as infertile soils, but red clay soils and clayey sandy soils are best. A useful, high-yielding crop for the dry areas. In many areas increased attack by insect pests at flowering time has reduced yields significantly in recent years. Rainfall: 600–1,000 mm. Agroclimatic Zones III–V. Flowers in May–June and fruits in July–August in Eastern Province.

**USES:** Firewood, edible seeds, edible young pods (eaten like French beans), fodder (leaves and pods), green manure, bee forage, nitrogen-fixing, soil conservation and improvement.

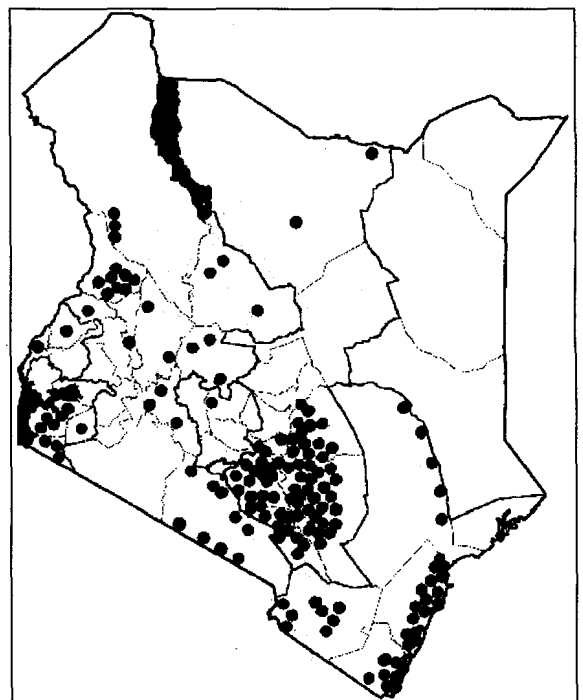
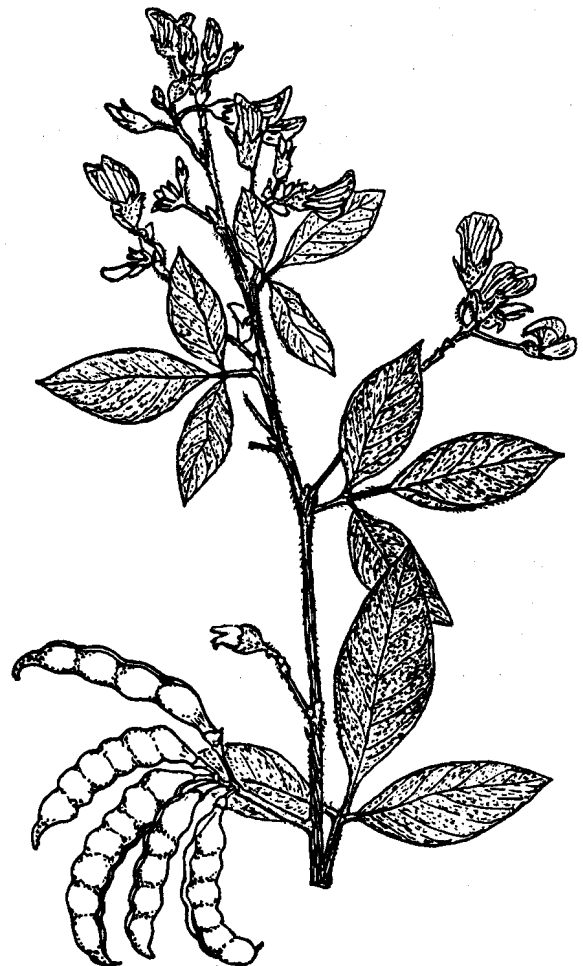
**PROPAGATION:** Direct sowing at site.

**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. Germinates 2–3 weeks after sowing.



**treatment:** Germinates readily. No pretreatment is needed.

**storage:** Seed can be stored for long periods, but very susceptible to insect attack (weevils). Add ash.



## *Cajanus cajan* (cont)

**MANAGEMENT:** Fast growing; regular weeding. May be grown as a pure stand or with other crops. In the low hot regions of Eastern Province it is normally planted during the short October–November rains and harvested in July–August the following year. In Nyanza and at the coast normally planted sparsely in cropland or at the edges of cultivated areas. Occasionally used as a boundary marker.

**REMARKS:** Perennial ‘tree types’ are available. After harvesting the stalks are cut and used as firewood (rather poor quality, burns fast but an important fuel during the wet and planting seasons). A good plant for crop rotation or intercropping and an important fodder plant during the dry season after crop harvest. The dry leaves and pods

remain after harvest and are important food for donkeys, cattle and goats. Sold in various forms: fresh pods, green peas without pods and dry peas. It may be intercropped with deeply rooted crops. Crops with shallow roots, such as maize, beans, millets, sorghum and quick-maturing types of cowpeas are adversely affected. The origin of this important crop is believed to be Asia. Cultivated in India for thousands of years for its seeds (*dhal*) the name *Cajanus* is derived from the local Malay name, *kacang*, which is pronounced ‘cut-jung’.

**FURTHER READING:** <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Jensen, 1999; Katende et al., 1995; Maundu et al., 1999; Mbuya et al., 1994; National Academy of Sciences, 1980.

