



PLANT FACT SHEET

Cajanus cajan (L.) Millsp.

GENUS *Cajanus* FAMILY Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Pigeon pea

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Leaves, Pods, Sprouts, Vegetable

Young leaves, shoots and pods are eaten. The pods can be used in curries. The leaves and shoots as potherbs. Young seeds are cooked and eaten like peas. Ripe seeds are also cooked and eaten in soups and curries. Bean sprouts can be produced and eaten. Preparation of the seeds for dahl is somewhat complicated.

DESCRIPTION

An upright perennial shrubby legume. It lives for 3-4 years. They can be up to about 4 m tall and spreads to 1.5 m wide. The stem is erect and branching. It has a bushy appearance. It has a strong deep taproot. The root nodules are round and sometimes lobed. Young stems are angled and hairy. A leaf consists of 3 leaflets. Leaflets are narrow and green with a silvery green underneath. Leaflet size can be 10 cm x 3 cm. The end leaflet is larger with a longer leaf stalk. Flowers are red and yellow. The large petal has red lines. They are pea shaped and on branched flower stalks which stick upwards in the axils of leaves. Pods are long, straight and narrow, often with 4-8 seeds. The pods are slightly hairy. Pods are often 4-8 cm long and have a beak at the end. Pods are constricted between the seeds. Many varieties of pigeon pea occur. Some are dwarf and day length neutral. Seeds vary in shape, size and colour.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. Plants require a tropical or subtropical climate. Plants grow from sea level up to about 1800 m in the tropics. They can tolerate drought and are suited to a drier climate. They can grow in places with less than 600 mm rainfall per year. They do less well in the wet tropics. It suffers in waterlogged soils and is damaged by frost. It can also tolerate heat. It will grow on poor soils. It cannot grow on salty soils. It grows to about 2000 m in Nepal. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 10-12. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

They are grown from seeds. It is best to sow seeds where the plants are to grow. Seeds normally germinate easily and well. Before sowing seed it helps to soak them in cold water for one day. Seeds store well if kept cool and dry. A spacing of 1.5 m x 1.5 m is suitable. Plants can be cut back and allowed to re-grow. Plants can also be grown from cuttings.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants are fast growing. Pods are ready after 5 months. Mature seeds take about 8 months. Plants will often live for 3-4 years. Plants are cross pollinated by insects, or self pollinated.

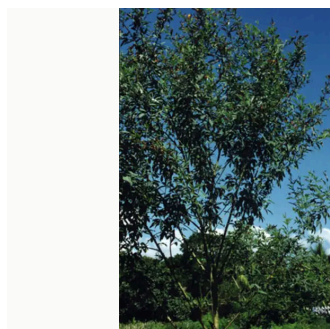
NOTES

There are 37 *Cajanus* species.

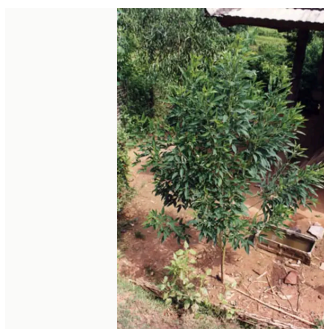
PICTURES



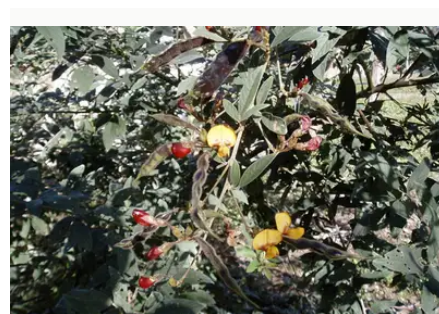
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