

# Pigeon Pea

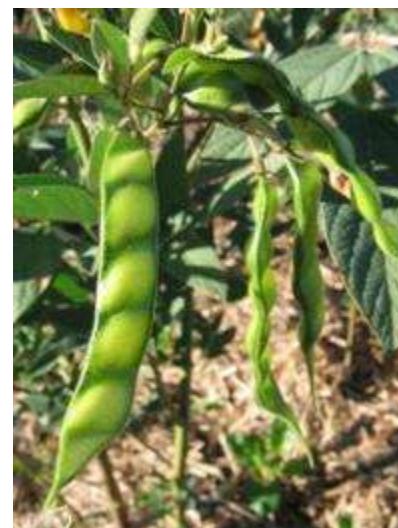
## Pigeon Pea in Afghanistan

Many farmers in Afghanistan grow pigeon pea as windbreaks or as a living fence to prevent animals from moving between fields. It is also recognized as a drought-resistant green manure. However, Afghan farmers are generally unaware that pigeon pea is an excellent and reliable food source for both humans and livestock, particularly because of its drought-resistant characteristics.



## Pigeon Pea Characteristics

Pigeon pea (*Cajanus cajan* (L.)) is an erect perennial legume shrub often grown as an annual, reaching 3-12ft (1-4m) in height. Pigeon pea has yellow flowers and a deep root system (to 2 m).



## Pigeon Pea Benefits

Pigeon pea is useful because it is:

- tolerant to drought and poor soil quality.
- a good source of protein for animals and humans.
- deep rooted and thus can improve water infiltration into the soil and break up soil hardpans.
- a legume and thus an excellent source of organic nitrogen, and if incorporated into the soil, can increase soil organic matter, improving soil fertility and structure.
- a method to help suppress weed growth

## Recommended Growing Conditions

**Soils.** Pigeon pea can be grown in a variety of soils, ranging from sandy soils to heavy clays. A pH 5-7 is ideal, but pigeon pea can tolerate pH from 4.5-8.4.



Mature raw pigeon pea

**Inoculation.** Special inoculants - bacteria in the soil that help legumes take nitrogen from the air for use in the plant - are usually not required for pigeon pea.

**Water requirements.** Pigeon pea is one of the more drought tolerant legumes, able to grow with a dry season exceeding 6 months, and in areas where rainfall is less than 300 mm

**Temperature.** Pigeon pea grows well in hot and humid climates like the eastern provinces of Afghanistan (e.g. Nangharhar province).

**Grazing tolerance.** Pigeon pea does not tolerate frequent or heavy defoliation as with continuous grazing, but it can tolerate some early grazing.

**Fire.** Pigeon pea is easily killed by fire.