



**Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**  
**Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries**



**GROW**  
*Trinidad*

# PIGEON PEA

(pronounced pi-jun pi)

A Step by Step Process  
for Home Gardening

**#PlantSomething**

All seeds locally produced by  
the National Seed Bank

Variety: Tobago Pigeon Peas



## KNOW your Pigeon Pea

Pigeon Pea is a legume that is widely grown in the Caribbean. It is also known as red gram, tur, or as gungo peas. The flowers are bell-shaped blooms are usually borne in pairs and may be yellow, or yellow and red. It is grown as a pulse crop (i.e., harvested for dry seed) or eaten green as a cooked vegetable.

The seedpod hulls and threshed waste of harvested plants make an excellent, nutritious high-protein forage for livestock, particularly sheep.



## 1. How to GROW



To grow well, ALL Plants must have light – from the sun; moisture – from rainfall or irrigation; and nutrients – from fertilizers, compost or manure.

### Plant Establishment [Germinating and Sowing]:

1. Choose an open, full sun-lit planting area, as the pigeon pea thrives in well-drained soils and a hot environment. The plant will not grow in waterlogged areas.
2. Sow seeds 4cm (1.5 inches) deep on 0.5 - 1 m (1½ - 3 feet) wide rows.
3. Look out for seedlings within 3 weeks as they will grow slowly.
4. Apply a soil fungicide, if needed, as a drench in the planting hole to prevent attack by fungi and an insecticide to prevent attack by soil insects such as cutworms and mole crickets.
5. Sow 5 seeds per mound, at a depth of 5-7.5 cm (2-3 in.).
6. Thin out about 1-2 weeks after germination and leave 3-4 healthy seedlings per mound.
7. Ensure the plant gets at least 12.5 hours or less of daylight to initiate flowering and seed production.

**NOTE: Pigeon pea is very susceptible to fire.**



## Plant Fertilizing

Fertilizing is not recommended as the plant grows well in soils with low phosphorus levels.

## Plant Care [Cultural Practices]



Maintain plant health by:

- **keeping** the plants free from all weeds especially during the first 6 weeks after seedlings emerge.
- **ensuring that** the plants get enough and uniform watering even if the plant can survive up to 6 months in very dry conditions.

- **managing pests and diseases**, which is generally not a major problem. The biggest pest problems are the larvae that hatch from moth eggs. They feed on the above-ground plant parts and eventually bore into the developing pods to feed on the seeds. These pests can also be controlled by BT insecticides or managed through naturally occurring insects (egg



**Seed borer on pigeon pea pod**

parasite *Trichogramma exiguum* (polyphagous wasps), Braconid wasps and lacewing larvae). The most significant disease problem is a fungal disease (*Fusarium*) that attacks mainly at the seedling stage, but this occurrence is rare and if presenting, can be controlled by fungicides containing Metiram.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM), based on cultural and biological methods, is the best approach to controlling pests and diseases in a home garden. Pesticides should be used as a last resort. (See Factsheet on "Integrated Pest Management for Home Gardeners").

## 2. When and How to HARVEST



- Monitor the development as time to maturity may vary greatly due to seed variety, temperature and duration of exposure to sunlight. Flowering will generally occur between 65-80 days and creation of mature seeds requires 50-75 additional days. Many varieties have been developed to flower earlier.
- Pick the seedpods when they are about 5 - 9 cm (2 to 3.5 inches) long and 12 mm (½ inch) wide. When mature, they will be flat, covered with soft hairs. The round or oval seeds may be light beige to dark brown.



### **WHY grow Pigeon peas? Because it:**

- is a very hardy plant, 60% self-pollinated, requires no fertiliser use.
- is a fast-growing, excellent plant to improve the health of the soils due to its nitrogen-fixing qualities.
- is an easy crop to manage as an annual shrub or a perennial plant, growing 1-2m in height (3 to 6 ft).
- has a deep tap root system that makes it resistant to very dry conditions, drawing water from deeper soil depths than most legumes, so will not interfere with the water uptake of other garden crops.
- has a productive life span for up to five years and is a prolific producer of seed.
- can be grown along a fence and/or in a hedge row, providing shade cover for short-term crops.
- can be pruned and trimmed and the leaves used as feed for animals.
- is good source of dietary fibre, and various vitamins: thiamine, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, copper, manganese, folate, and an excellent source of vegetarian protein. The protein content in split seeds is similar to soybean.



### **Meal OPTIONS for Pigeon peas**

- a very versatile legume and can be cooked dried in numerous ways with rice to make a complete protein or cooked green and used the same as green peas.
- a popular ingredient in pelau, soups and salads; stewed with coconut milk, blended into vegetable patties, etc.



Pigeon pea soup

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For more information, contact the  
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