

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.

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.



Mature raw pigeon pea