

*Cajanus cajan*

## Papilionoideae

S. E. Asia

**English:** Pigeon pea  
**Kunda:** Nyamundolo  
**Nyanja:** Nyamundolo  
**Senga:** Pheni

**Ecology:** The genus *Cajanus* is recognized as containing 32 species. It was brought to West Africa early, then to the West Indies as a food crop. It is widely grown on a variety of soils, but not saline or waterlogged ones, 0–3,000 m. Researchers have developed varieties which are drought-resistant and give high yields in dry areas. Improved “tree-types” are also available (work done in India).

**Uses:** **Food** (seeds and leaves), **fodder** (leaves and pods), bee forage, windbreak, **nitrogen fixation**, **soil improvement**, soil conservation.

**Description:** A slender shrub growing up to 4 m high, annual or perennial, becoming woody with age. **LEAVES:** compound, the 3 leaflets ovate and pointed, **hairy white below**, to 8 cm long. **FLOWERS:** pale yellow, 2–3 cm in terminal groups, the large petal has red lines on the outside. **FRUIT:** **curved pods to 5 cm; hairy** with 4–5 green-grey seeds.

**Propagation:** Direct seeding, seedlings.

**Seed:** Seed highly susceptible to insect attack.

**treatment:** Soak old seeds in cold water for 24 hours. Fresh seeds do not require pre-treatment.

**storage:** Seed stores well if protected from insects.

**Management:** The tree types require pruning if they are to be intercropped.

**Remarks:** A useful high-yielding crop for dry areas but susceptible to many pests and diseases. In Eastern Province, the plant is often left to grow for 2 or more years. In Tanzania, a root extract is used for stomach-ache and as an aphrodisiac.

