



Jugo Bean

jugo bean (*Vigna subterranea*) isiZulu: izindlubu

Jugo bean, a legume, is a traditional crop in sub-Saharan Africa. Analysis of the diversity of the many landraces on the continent suggest that it originated in northeastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon in West Africa. It is the third most important legume grown on the continent after peanuts and cowpeas, with west Africa producing 50% of the harvest. Its West African roots have resulted in the most known common name: the Bambara nut. In Zimbabwe it is known as the Nyimo bean and in South Africa it is called the jugo bean and sometimes the round groundnut. In South Africa, jugo beans are mainly grown in KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

Jugo beans can be sown after the first rains in early summer. They grow to height of 35cm with a compact, well-developed tap root and creeping branched or spreading stems with three-leaflet clusters. Although jugo beans are related to cowpeas, the “bean” that is harvested comes from a pod produced in the ground, similar to peanuts. They start producing yellow flowers a month after planting. Once the flowers are fertilised the stems grow downwards to produce wrinkly pods, containing one or two seeds, buried in the soil. The beans are almost round, with a hard and shiny coat in a diversity of colours including white, cream, red, brown, black and speckled.

Jugo beans thrive in well drained, sandy-loam soils and high temperatures. Although they enjoy consistent rain while growing they do better in dry areas, and can produce a harvest with less than 500mm of rain per year.



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Jugo beans are the 3rd most important legume in Africa.

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Jugo beans are fairly resistant to disease. Traditional practices that reduce pests and diseases include interplanting pearl millet as a trap crop, early planting, planting in raised beds, and burying crop residues in deep soil. Harvested seeds store better if they are left in the shells. Shelled Jugo beans are attractive to weevils, which are deterred with the traditional practice of dusting them in wood ash, storing them in sand, or coating the seeds lightly with a vegetable oil.

Jugo beans are a nutritious food with some fat (6.5%), high carbohydrate (65%) and relatively high protein (18%) content. They contain all the essential amino acids, in greater quantities than peanuts, and with more methionine than other legumes. They are also high in phosphorus, magnesium and calcium.

Jugo beans are used medicinally in many cultures including to prevent nausea during pregnancy, treat diarrhoea, strengthen sick children and treat skin rashes. The ground beans and the leaves of the jugo bean are used as a stock feed.

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