Soybeans, Edible—*Glycine max* (L.) Merr.¹

James M. Stephens²

The soybean primarily is known and grown in the United States as a field crop for forage, feed, and oil. Few Americans think of it as a vegetable, but this has been its use in Asia for over 1000 years. It is becoming more popular as a garden vegetable throughout Florida and the rest of the country.

**Description**

The varieties suitable for vegetable use are different from those for field crops. Seedsmen in the United States now list vegetable varieties such as ‘Bansei,’ ‘Fuji,’ ‘Verde,’ and ‘Seminole.’ Varieties tested in Florida include ‘Verde,’ ‘Disoy,’ ‘Bansei,’ and ‘Giant Green.’ All of these make good green crops and produce many pods suitable for fresh table usage. The pods must be harvested when the beans are in a mature green stage. As they mature, fungus diseases become quite destructive. Anyone wanting to save seed in Florida would have problems.

**Culture**

The culture in Florida of edible soybeans should follow very closely that for lima beans. Soybeans should be planted in early spring in rows 2½ feet apart with 2 to 3 inches between plants. Fall production is also feasible.

**Use**

Edible soybeans are particularly suited as a fresh vegetable because of their good taste and high nutritional value. Tests on ‘Bansei’ and ‘Disoy’ showed fat at 18 to 20% and protein at 38%. One use as a vegetable is to boil the pods whole, then shell, and enjoy the seeds. Edible soybeans also make excellent bean sprouts. In many restaurants, the bean pods are extremely popular as an appetizer and are known as edameme.

---


² James M. Stephens, professor emeritus, Horticultural Sciences Department; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county’s UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.