

Garbanzo—*Cicer arietinum* L.¹

James M. Stephens²

The garbanzo bean is also known as chickpea, common gram, Bengal gram, pea bean, ceci, Indian gram, and gram pea. It has been in cultivation perhaps from before the Common Era.

Description

Garbanzo is a low bushy pea-like annual with hairy stems and leaves comprising several pairs of small leaflets. The edible seeds, borne in pods, are roughly globular, flattened on the sides, somewhat wrinkled, and about 1/3-inch in diameter.

Culture

Garbanzo is adapted to warm semiarid conditions, such as the coastal regions of California. In Florida, it is not a crop of commercial status and is seldom grown even in home gardens.

Culture is similar to that for dry beans. For gardeners who would like to try growing garbanzo, plant February through April, preferably in March. Plant in rows 2 feet apart and thin to 3 inches apart. A starter fertilizer is needed with little or no sidedressing required later, as the crop grows better under low nutrient and low moisture conditions.

Pests are not a big problem, except for bean beetles. Most frequent causes for poor results in Florida are poorly drained soils and insufficient length of growing season under ideal conditions. A growing season of 4 to 5 months

from seeding to harvest is normally required (seed are harvested mature).

Use

Garbanzo is a favorite dish of Latins. For years garbanzo bean soup has been a famous delicacy in the Ybor City area of Tampa. More recently the beans have become a popular item on salad bars everywhere.



Figure 1. Garbanzo
Credits: James M. Stephens

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