

Topic Page: [Beans](#)

Definition: **bean** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Plant grown for its edible seeds and seed pods. The broad bean (*Vicia faba*) is native to N Africa. The string bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) is native to tropical South America, and is common in the USA; several varieties are cultivated. The runner (*P. coccineus*) has scarlet, rather than white or lilac flowers, and shorter, broader seeds. See also soya bean

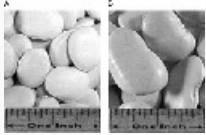


Image from: [Lima beans. \(A\) Smaller, sieva type:... in The Encyclopedia of Seeds: Science, Technology and Uses](#)

Summary Article: **bean**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

name applied to the seeds of leguminous trees and shrubs and to various leguminous plants of the family Leguminosae (pulse family) with edible seeds or seed pods (legumes). The genera and species encompassed by the term *bean* are many and variable. The broad beans (*Vicia faba*, of the vetch genus), the soybean types (*Glycine max*), and a few lesser species were the only beans known to the Old World before the discovery of America, by which time the indigenous peoples had already developed most of the bean types still used today, e.g., the lima beans, kidney beans, string beans, shell beans, and pea beans. All these are species and varieties of *Phaseolus*, the "true" bean genus; the hereditary history of most is unknown, and hence the taxonomic distinctions are often still uncertain. The plants are easily cultivated but susceptible to several diseases, e.g., rusts, blights, wilts, and bean anthracnose (a fungus).

Types of Beans

In general, beans are warm-season annuals (although the roots of tropical species tend to be perennial) that grow erect (bush types) or as vines (pole or running types). Field beans are mostly the bush type and are used as stock feed. This has also become the principal use of the ancient large-seeded broad bean (called also the horse or Windsor bean), still widely grown in Europe but seldom as food for humans.

The common garden beans comprise several bush types and most of the pole types; the most often cultivated and most varied species, *P. vulgata*, is familiar as both types. *P. vulgata* is the French haricot and the Spanish frijole. String beans, snap beans, green and yellow wax beans, and some kidney beans are eaten as whole pods; several kidney beans, pinto beans, pea beans, and many other types are sold as mature dry seeds. The lima or butter beans (*P. lunatus*, including the former *P. limensis*), usually pole but sometimes bush types, have a long history; they have been found in prehistoric Peruvian graves. The sieva is a type of lima. The scarlet runner (*P. multiflorus*), grown in Europe for food, is mainly an ornamental vine in North America. The tepary (*P. acutifolius latifolius*), a small variety long grown by Indians in the SW United States, has been found better suited to hot, arid climates and is more prolific than the frijole.

Other beans are the hyacinth bean or lablab (*Dolichos lablab*), grown in E Asia and the tropics for forage and food and cultivated in North America as an ornamental vine; the asparagus bean or yard-long bean (*Vigna sesquipedalis*), grown in E Asia for food but often cultivated in the West as a curiosity;

and the velvet bean (*Stizolobium*), cultivated in the S United States as a forage and cover crop. The carob, the cowpea or black-eyed pea, and the chickpea or garbanzo are among the many other legumes sometimes considered beans. The sacred bean of India is the seed of the Indian lotus (of the water lily family).

Uses of Beans

Because seeds contain much protein, beans are useful as a meat substitute and in different parts of the world are a characteristic item—often a staple—of the national fare. Baked beans, cooked for hours with pork or molasses or both, are a traditional New England dish. The Greeks and Romans used the broad bean for balloting—black seeds to signify opposition and white seeds agreement. This custom lingered in England in the election of the king and queen for Twelfth Night and other celebrations and was taken to the New World colony at Massachusetts Bay, where Indian beans were used.

Classification

Beans are classified in the division Magnoliophyta, class Magnoliopsida, order Rosales, family Leguminosae.

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Bean. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bean>



The Columbia Encyclopedia, © Columbia University Press 2018



The Columbia Encyclopedia, © Columbia University Press 2018

APA

Bean. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bean>

Chicago

"bean." In *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, by Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University. 8th ed. Columbia University Press, 2018. <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bean>

Harvard

Bean. (2018). In P. Lagasse & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia*. (8th ed.). [Online]. New York: Columbia University Press. Available from: <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bean> [Accessed 18 November 2019].

MLA

"bean." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*, <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bean>. Accessed 18 Nov. 2019.