

Bean, Tepary—*Phaseolus acutifolius* A. Gray¹

James M. Stephens²

Tepary bean is also known as tepari, yori mui, pavi, and Texas bean. It is seldom grown in Florida because it is better adapted to a more arid climate. It originated and still grows wild in Mexico and the US Southwest. The plant was taken to Africa where selections were made for that area.

Description

Wild tepary beans are viny, up to 10 feet long, enabling it to climb desert shrubs. The cultivated varieties are bush types, or sometimes semi-viny, growing to an average height of about 30 inches.



Figure 1. Tepary bean
Credits: James M. Stephens

The pointed trifoliate leaves are about the size of lima bean leaves. The pods are short, about 3 inches long, slightly hairy, and green. Later, the pods dry to a light

straw color. Seeds, usually five or six per pod, vary in color but commonly are buff colored, flat, and resemble a small butterbean or navy bean.

Culture

Tepary beans are best suited for use as dry beans. The plants are drought tolerant but do need ample moisture for seed germination and early growth. If grown with irrigation, yields are increased over nonirrigated beans.

In north Florida observation trials, the beans were planted the first of September and allowed to mature in November before the onset of cold weather. Yields were fair during the short days of this production period. Better yields would be expected in south Florida during the winter months, which are even shorter in daylength since the beans are daylength sensitive. Trials have been insufficient as yet to determine how well this bean would fare under Florida's humid climate.

At Gainesville in the fall, bean leafrollers were the most damaging pest problem encountered. Seed inoculation is reported to be the same as for lima bean.

Varieties offered to home gardeners by other gardeners include 'Blue Tepary,' 'Brown Tepary,' 'Light Brown Tepary,' 'Light Green Tepary,' 'Papago White Tepary,' 'Ivory Coast,' and 'White Tepary.'

1. This document is HS558, one of a series of the Horticultural Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date April 1994. Revised August 2015. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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

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Use

Tepary beans are high in protein (23–25%). They are eaten like other dry beans, first soaked, then boiled or baked. The American Indians of the Southwest have developed various other uses for the beans such as in soups, stews, and ground meal.