

*Phaseolus lunatus*

[Synonyms : *Phaseolus bipunctatus*, *Phaseolus foecundus*, *Phaseolus inamoenus*, *Phaseolus inamuenus*, *Phaseolus latisiliquus*, *Phaseolus limensis*, *Phaseolus lunatus* var. *lunonanus*, *Phaseolus lunatus macrocarpus*, *Phaseolus parviflorus*, *Phaseolus potoricensis*, *Phaseolus puberulus*, *Phaseolus rufus*, *Phaseolus saccharatus*, *Phaseolus tunkinensis*, *Phaseolus xuaresii*]

**LIMA BEAN** is an annual, biennial or perennial climber. Native to tropical South America it has pea-like greenish, pale yellow or white flowers.

It is also known as *Adua* (Twi), *Apateram* (Twi), *Bunburbutty* (Bengali), Burma bean, Butter bean, Cape bean, Cape pea, Chad bean, Climbing baby lima, Duffin bean, *Fazol měsíční* (Czech), *Fazul'a* (Slovak), *Haricot de Lima* (French), Hibbert bean, Jack bean, *Kachang china* (Malay), *Kachang mas* (Sundanese), *Kara* (Javanese), *Limaböna* (Swedish), Lima bush beans, *Limanpapu* (Finnish), *Lobiya* (Punjabi), Madagascar bean, *Mian dou* (Chinese), *Noe* (Kikuyu), *Patani* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Pois du cap* (French), *Pois de souche* (French), Pole bean, *Pwa-d'shous* (Creole), *Rai mame* (Japanese), Rangoon bean, Sieva bean, Sieva lima, Small seeded lima bean, Sugar bean, Sword bean, and *Tua rachamat* (Thai),.

Warning – apart from the cultivated variety, other varieties particularly those containing coloured seeds (especially purple or brown marked) can be very poisonous. The root is said to be poisonous and it can cause giddiness, abdominal pain, weak and quickened pulse, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever. Both fresh and dried beans need to be cooked before they are eaten.

*Lunatus* is derived from Latin *luna* (moon) meaning ‘crescent moon-shaped’.

It seems that earliest known remains (800 AD) of a small-seeded form of the lima bean were found in Mexico but in large-seeded form. Peruvian excavations suggest that its cultivation began before 6000 BC – and early Peruvian civilizations are said to have used a speckled variety to send messages.

There are many varieties of lima bean and in South America particularly these can be of many other colours than the white that is probably most familiar in North America and Europe. Spreading north from South and Middle America the lima bean and many of its varieties came to be known by south-western North American Indian tribes.

The Hopi held it in considerable esteem. They planted beans early in the season in their underground ceremonial chambers (or *kivas*) and sprouting success was supposed to indicate the quality of the harvest of those planted out on the sites which had been pre-arranged with the gods. Like the runner bean (*Phaseolus coccineus*) the lima bean featured in North American Iroquois ritual too when crops were being planted or harvested.

As a food it was familiar to quite a few North American Indian tribes, including some of the Navajo. The Havasupai and Iroquois both dried the seed pods for storage and Winter food, and they also made the beans into soups. These beans were used by the Iroquois and Cherokee to make bread, the Iroquois added them to stews, and the Havasupai and some of the Chippewa also cooked them as a vegetable.

The leaves have been cooked as a vegetable like spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*).

The vines (made into hay) are used in some areas as animal fodder.