


## Cowpea leaves and pods

Preferred climactic conditions	
<b>Air temperature</b>	Hot temperatures up to 30°C
<b>Soil type</b>	Can grow in a wide range of soils if well drained
<b>Climate conditions</b>	Hot-dry
<b>Sun/shade tolerance</b>	Full sun
<b>Drought tolerance</b>	High
<b>Flood tolerance</b>	Low

Seed sowing and spacing	
<b>Direct seeding</b>	Plant one seed per planting hole
<b>Seed depth</b>	4 cm
<b>Between-plant spacing: 15 cm</b>	
<b>Row spacing: 40 cm</b>	

Cultivation
<b>Irrigation needs:</b> Although cowpea is relatively drought tolerant, insufficient water will reduce yield. Gently irrigate after sowing to reduce seed displacement and then water daily. Once beans have started to flower they become very sensitive to soil moisture deficit. Adequate irrigation at this time will reduce flower drop and increase yield.
<b>Fertilizer:</b> Start with a well-fertilized bed. Beans will benefit greatly from compost or manure if the soils are infertile.
<b>Special cultivation practices:</b> Beans should be grown on ridges as the plants are highly susceptible to water logging after heavy rains. Ridges are made by hoe or using oxen in two passes. The first pass is made when weeds are still small, and the second one month later to work up the ridges again. Two-stage preparation is advisable to avoid excessive incorporation of weeds as this will reduce yields.

Harvesting	
<b>LEAVES</b>	<b>PODS</b>
<b>When to harvest:</b>	<b>When to harvest:</b>
For cowpea leaves, harvest leaves <b>30 days</b> after planting.	For cowpea pods, harvest pods at <b>40–50 days</b> after planting for immature or green pods and at <b>55–70 days</b> after planting for dry seeds or pods. Pods should be harvested all at once when 2/3 of the pods are dry and yellow. The pods do not mature at the same time because cowpea flowers have a staggered flowering period. Pods should be harvested when they turn from green to yellow/brown, but before they shatter.
<b>How to harvest:</b>	<b>How to harvest:</b>
For leaves, pluck leaves and stems off the plant as needed 10 cm above ground.	For pods, green pods can be continuously harvested as long as the outline of the seed is visible on the pod. For dried pods, the whole plant should be pulled from the soil and left to dry when at least two-thirds of pods appear dry and yellow. When the pods are dry enough to split, place them into sacks, beat the sacks with a stick, and winnow off the chaff for seeds or peas.



Cowpea flowering



Mature plant



Cowpea leaves can be harvested



Cowpea pods



Mature pods ready for harvest



Harvested cowpea pods