

# *Important Steps In Growing Cowpeas*

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1. The cowpea is adapted to all parts of Texas wherever there is sufficient moisture for its growth. It thrives best, however, in the more humid sections of the state.

2. While cowpeas will grow in practically all types of soil, even on land that is deficient in lime, they succeed best on well drained, properly inoculated and moderately rich soil.

3. Some good varieties of cowpeas are Brabham, New Era, Groit, Chinese Red, Iron, Blackeye and Whip-poorwill. The Chinese Red variety is well adapted for hay as it grows upright, matures in 60 to 70 days and is easily cured. The Brabham is well adapted in East Texas for grazing as well as for hay and soil improvement.

4. The Brabham and Iron varieties are resistant to root knot and wilt and hence are suitable for planting on land infested with these pests. They should be the only varieties planted in orchards on sandy land in order to prevent nematode infestation. The nematodes cause root knot on most fruit trees as well as many other plants.

5. The seed bed should be prepared as well as for cotton or corn.

6. Inoculation of the seed with bacterial culture is good crop insurance because there is no certain way to tell whether there are sufficient bacteria of the right kind in the soil to produce nodules on the roots. Furthermore, experiments have shown that bacteria in the soil may become inactive and lose their power of utilizing the nitrogen of the air. Hence the presence of nodules is not always a sure indication that sufficient atmospheric nitrogen is being made available for the plants.

7. Since the cowpea is a warm weather crop, it should not be sown until the ground has become thoroughly warmed.

8. Cowpeas are well adapted to interplant with corn or grain sorghum and to plant after small grain in a rotation such as cotton, corn, oats, and cowpeas.

9. When cowpeas are interplanted with corn or grain sorghum the seed should not be planted until these crops are from 2 to 3 feet high as earlier planting often reduces the yield of grain crops.

10. For hay or seed, cowpeas are planted mostly in 3 ft. rows so that the crop may be cultivated. About 30 lbs. of seed per acre is required for the larger seeded varieties such as Whippoorwill and Blackeye, and 15 to 20 lbs. per acre for the small varieties such as Chinese Red and Braham. When sown broadcast at least double these amounts should be used.

11. On poor sandy soils the crop should be fertilized with 100 to 150 lbs. of superphosphate and 15 to 20 lbs. of muriate of potash per acre. On very poor soils cowpeas are benefitted by adding a small amount of nitrogen to the mixture as this gives them a quicker start.

12. As is the case with other crops cowpeas should be kept free from weeds by shallow cultivation.

13. Cowpeas should be mowed for hay when the first pods are turning yellow. In the humid sections the plants should be partly cured in the swath and then shocked around poles having two cross pieces about eight inches above the ground.

14. The cowpea weevil in stored seed may be controlled by fumigating in a tight container with one pound of highlife per 100 cubic feet of space or one ounce to a 50 gallon barrel, for 24 hours and then thoroughly ventilating so as not to injure the germination. If any eggs should hatch, the treatment should be repeated. Ethylene dichloride—carbon tetrachloride mixture, now on the market, is also effective in tight bins at a temperature above 70 degrees F. It is free from fire hazard under ordinary conditions and may be used as a substitute for carbon disulphide (highlife) at the rate of 2½ to 5 lbs. per 100 cubic feet of bin space or two to three ounces to a 50 gallon barrel. It should be sprinkled or poured on top of the grain and then covered with a canvas or roofing paper if the container is not full. The gas from this mixture similar to the gas from highlife, is heavier than air and will sink.

The weevils also may be killed by heating the seed for 3 to 4 hours at a temperature of 135 degrees F. without injuring the germination if done carefully. Another method of killing the weevils and preventing their increase is to mix the seed with hydrated lime at the rate of one pound of lime to two pounds of peas in small quantities or one to four for larger quantities. Placing an inch layer of lime or fine dust over the top of the peas, if stored in tight drums or barrels, will stop nearly all increase but will not kill the weevils in the peas. The treated seed may be used for food after washing.