

## *Tropical Vegetables for the South Florida Garden*

Many vegetable gardeners living in South Florida become very discouraged when they try to grow tomatoes, squash, beans and sweet peppers during our intensely hot and humid summer months. To be sure, hot climate vegetable gardening is different.

If you choose tropical and sub-tropical vegetables for your summertime garden, instead of the traditional vegetables, you may be rewarded with a bounty of exotic delectables for home use. Though, some of these subtropical vegetables may be new to you, it is not difficult to learn how to grow and use them in your diet.

**Boniatos- *Ipomoea batatas*** are commonly called Cuban sweet potatoes. Boniatos differ from the ordinary sweet potatoes by having a distinctive white interior rather than the sweet potatoes characteristic orange flesh. Boniatos are planted year-round in South Florida with harvests 120-180 days after planting.

**Ginger- *Zingiber officinale*** is a perennial plant whose underground stems(rhizomes) are used as a flavoring agent. Ginger is started by rhizome cuttings. Cut the rhizome into pieces 1-1.5 inches long, each containing at least one eye(bud). Allow the cut surfaces to dry before planting to reduce the chance of rotting. In the planting bed, insert each piece and cover with about an inch of soil. To harvest, dig rhizomes in the fall or when the top leaves and stalks have died down. Allow rhizomes to dry in the shade before use.

**Pigeon Peas- *Cajanus cajan*** are legumes widely propagated in the tropics for their edible seeds and pods. Pigeon Pea pods are similar to English peas, green and pointed with a bit of reddish mottling. Pigeon peas can be planted in late spring (May) and harvested in the late fall (October-November). For more information on Tropical Vegetables refer to University of Florida publication [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic\\_hs\\_minor\\_vegetables](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_hs_minor_vegetables)

Call the Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener volunteer hotline at 233-1758 M-F, 9-4 with your vegetable gardening questions.



Figure 1 Pigeon Peas