

# Did You Know?

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## Butterfly Pea Flower, *Clitoria ternatea*

- *Clitoria ternatea*, is commonly known as butterfly pea flower, Asian pigeonwings, Darwin pea, and blue pea among others.
- It is in the Fabaceae or pea family and like other legumes, will fix nitrogen in the soil to make it available for other plants. “Fixing” nitrogen is a result of a symbiotic relationship with soil bacteria called rhizobia, which transforms atmospheric nitrogen into a form that plants can use.
- This vine prefers to grow in well-drained soil and full sun (6-8 hours) in warm climates. It is a perennial in zones 9-11 and grown as an annual in other climates. It grows up to 15 feet tall. The flower is a vivid deep blue to violet color with light yellow and white markings in the center.
- The flowers, leaves, tender pods and young shoots are all edible.
- Butterfly Pea Flower has a long history of culinary, cosmetic, medicinal, and insecticidal uses.
- The flowers are the most commonly used to make dyes and teas, but the leaves can also yield a green dye.
- The phenolic pigments in the flowers are called anthocyanins which have antioxidant properties and are what create the intense flower color as well as the health benefits.
- The flowers make a blue dye naturally. The addition of an acid like lemon, lime juice, or tonic water will change it to purple or even pink.
- The dye from butterfly pea flower is heat stable, so useful for a wide range of food and beverages like rice, chewing gum, yogurt, sports drinks and ice cream.
- It is popular in making brilliantly colored cocktails too. Infuse the alcohol for a purple – blue color, depending on the pH. Add the acid and steep to change the color. Empress 1908 Indigo Gin is colored commercially.
- Sero-X is a commercial insecticide made from an extract from butterfly pea and is registered for use in Australia on crops like cotton. It also is naturally pollinator safe.

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