

# LEGUME FAMILY ALBUM

## FABACEAE OR LEGUMINOSAE

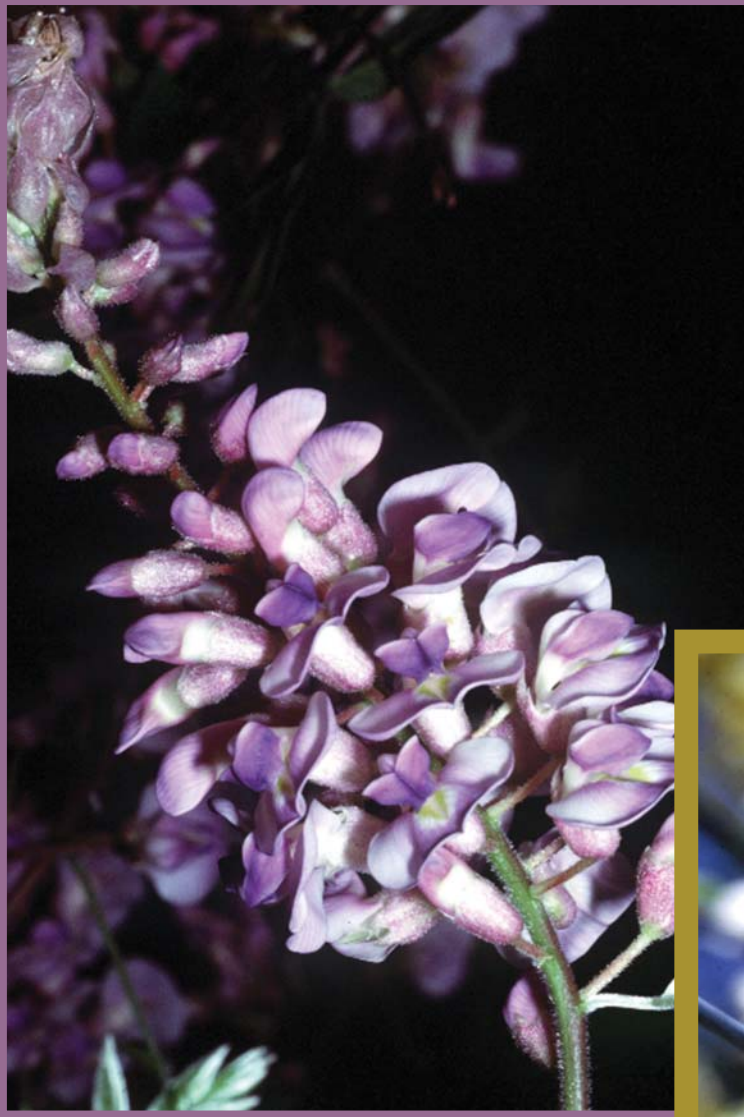
### Counting Beans

In a sense, we are all bean counters, i.e., we count on members of the bean family to provide protein in our diet. The legumes are especially important in cultures or regions where animal protein is less available.

Many legumes are associated with certain bacteria that convert atmospheric nitrogen gas into a form usable by plants. This process is called nitrogen-fixation and is a true symbiotic relationship—the bacteria receive plant-produced carbohydrates, and the plant receives essential nitrogen, thus allowing it to live on nutrient-poor soils.



G.A. Cooper @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS



Robert H. Mohlenbrock @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA SCS. 1991. Southern wetland flora: Field office guide to plant species. South National Technical Center, Fort Worth, TX.

There are three different floral types in the legume family, and they are so distinct that some taxonomists treat the group as three separate families. Compare the familiar butterfly-shaped pea flowers with the “puffball” mimosa and claw-like honey locust flowers. Despite their differences, recent DNA research supports uniting them into one family.

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