

SEA BEANS OF BENIN (WEST-AFRICA)

Sea beans is a colloquial name for a large variety of drift seeds. They originate from tropical plants and vines spread across all tropical regions of the globe. The seeds are washed into the ocean by rains and rivers and can drift for years and thousands of kilometers before being washed ashore, without losing their viability. Sea hearts, and the chestnut-like sea purses and hamburger seeds are appreciated for their decorative qualities, but they also provide insights in the oceanic proliferation of seeds across the globe. In West-Africa, sea purses are traditionally used as marbles in games like 'jeu d'Ive', whereas nickerbeans are widely used for the strategy game Oware or Awalé. The below sample was collected in Benin (Cotonou and vicinity) during and after the rainy season 2013. Nowhere abundant, more than 200 specimens (excl. Bay beans) were collected over a three-month period. The probabilities of finding a particular bean are based on this sample.

Sea hearts



(*Entada sp.*) 1 in 25

Sea purses (*Dioclea sp.*)



1 in 3



1 in 8



1 in 11



1 in 20



N = 1



N = 1

Hamburger beans (*Mucuna sp.*)



1 in 7



1 in 15



1 in 20



1 in 50

Miscellaneous



1 in 50



Unknown species N = 1



Gray Nickerbean 1 in 25
(*Caesalpinia sp.*)



Bay beans Common
(*Canavalia sp.*)