THE REDFIELD TEPARY BEAN, AN EARLY MATURING VARIETY

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Certain annual plants have the capacity to adapt themselves rather rapidly over a period of years to changed environment as a result of natural selection within a heterogeneous or distinctly variable population. This characteristic is possessed by some plants to a greater degree than others. An outstanding example of such change in adaptation has occurred in a variety of the tepary bean (Phaseolus acutifolius, Gray, var. latifolius, Freem.) grown in the Redfield field experiments at Redfield, South Dakota.

The cultivated varieties of the tepary bean have been developed from one of the two distant forms of Phaseolus acutifolius which are native to the southwestern United States and to Mexico. Many varieties had been developed and grown for food by the Indians before the advent of the white man. Freeman collected 47 distinct varieties of teparies among the Indian tribes of Arizona and Mexico in 1910 and he first called attention to the possibilities of the species as a drought-resistant crop for the West and Southwest. A number of varieties of teparies are now grown to some extent in Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and west Texas as human food, as a hay plant, or as a cover crop.

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