a 1955 cross between Florida line 231-51, a small-podded line closely related to 'Dixie Runner' and 392-12-1-7, a large-podded line closely related to 'Florigiant'. Early Bunch was tested experimentally as UF70115 and F459B. Superior pod characteristics (clean and uniform) were noted in the F₃ through the F₆ generations. It was first evaluated for yield in the F₆ generation. Early Bunch is a composite of five sister lines and is genetically capable of outyielding 'Florunner' and Florigiant, two widely grown, high yielding peanut cultivars.

The plants of Early Bunch have a spreading bunch growth habit. Side branches are somewhat upright giving the plants a rounded appearance compared with the procumbent appearance due to the horizontal growth of the side branches of Florigiant. The lateral branches have alternate pairs of vegetative and reproductive leaf axils as do those found on Florigiant.

Early Bunch matures up to 10 days earlier than Florigiant or Florunner, in the Southeastern United States, and both pods and seed grade as a Virginia market-type peanut. It has clean, uniform pods and oblong seeds that are slightly darker pink than Florigiant seeds. The foliage of Early Bunch is noticeably lighter green than that of Florigiant or Florunner, especially as maturity approaches.

Yield and quality of Early Bunch have been compared with Florigiant and Florunner for 6 years at three locations in Florida and two locations in Georgia. When averaged over five test locations, the yield of Early Bunch was 10% and 3% greater than Florigiant and Florunner, respectively. The results indicated that Early Bunch may have had more of a production advantage on sandy soils (Gainesville and Tifton) than on heavier soils (Jay and Plains).

Data on pod size showed that 75 to 80% of the pods of Early Bunch were Virginia-size (pods riding presizer rollers spaced at 13.5 mm), which is 5 to 10% less than the percent for Florigiant. However, the market grade data for Early Bunch consistently averaged 2%, 3% to 7%, and 1% to 3% greater than that for Florigiant for shelling percent, extra-large kernels, and sound-mature kernels, respectively.

Early Bunch has a higher percentage of polyunsaturated linoleic acid in its oil than does either Florigiant or Florunner. Also, Early Bunch, with a polyunsaturated-to-saturated acid ratio of 1.84 to 1 (compared with Florigiant’s 1.42 to 1 and Florunner’s 1.55 to 1), approaches the 2 to 1 ratio considered desirable. Stability of oil samples, for Early Bunch, measured by weight gain at 60°C, was 1½ days shorter than stability of similar samples for Florigiant or Florunner.

The protein content of Early Bunch consistently measured higher (0.5 to 3.0%) than that for Florigiant or Florunner. The sugar content of Early Bunch (sucrose, raffinose, and stachyose) was 3.04% compared with 3.25% for Florigiant and 4.1% for Florunner. Consumer acceptance ratings of finished products for Early Bunch have generally been satisfactory and sometimes superior to those for Florunner and Florigiant.

Because Early Bunch matures in a shorter period of time and has larger fruit size than Florunner, mismanagement can be more costly. It is less tolerant than Florunner to drought stress and nutrient imbalance in the soil; like other large-seeded peanut varieties, it needs an adequate supply of available calcium in the pegging zone to produce high yields of good quality peanuts. Avoiding pod losses in the heavier soils may be more difficult with Early Bunch than with small-podded types.

Early Bunch is registered as number 7500062 in the USDA Plant Variety Protection Office. The certificate specifies that seeds of Early Bunch sold in commercial channels by variety name must be certified by an official seed certifying agency.