



2017 is the Year of the Bean

Celebrate the Year of the Bean and grow your own. Anyone can grow garden beans, they are one of the easiest vegetable to grow, they taste delicious picked fresh from the garden and many beans have pretty flowers too.

Growing beans is fun and easy and you get to eat the beans too. Bean plants make attractive garden plants. Runner beans were once grown for their ornamental value and most bean flowers are very rich in nectar and a magnet for garden pollinators and especially bees.

Whether you like the elegant pencil thin French beans, the long podded runner beans, the beans for drying or the early cropping broad beans; there's a bean for every garden, every planter and every plate.

You can sow and grow the beans from seed really easily from seed, or visit the garden centre or nursery in spring for ready grown plants for your garden.

PERFECT FOR POLLINATORS

All types of bean flowers need pollinators to ensure that the plants make beans. Be kind to the bees and grow plenty of single, open flowers to attract them to your garden. Go easy on using pesticides of all types and where possible don't use them at all, your edible beans will then be free of any residues and your garden will be a safer place for all.

SPACE CONTROL

When you have a small garden, or maybe just a patio or balcony you can still grow beans. If there's a wall or a vertical surface where you can train beans up a trellis or some bean netting then you can grow climbing French beans or runner beans in a trough or planter placed at the bottom and against the wall or fence. Pinch the tips out of the plants as they reach the maximum height or you will end up with 'Jack and the Beanstalk' sized plants. If head height is restricted then choose to grow dwarf beans. These are shorter, more compact plants that will bear clusters of tasty pencil podded beans. You can also

buy seed for dwarf runner bean plants that are ideal for pots and planters.

GOOD NEIGHBOURS

All bean flowers need to be pollinated to form the precious pods that we crave. Bumblebees are the best pollinators for runner beans as they can climb into the larger flowers to reach the nectar, transferring the pollen from flower to flower as they go. Attract these and other precious pollinators by under planting your beans with nasturtiums. The large bright flowers act as flags to these insects and offer a good source of alternative nectar and pollen for the bees to feed on. Other good flowering plants to grow near beans to attract pollinators include cosmos, borage and sunflowers.

SOME COLOURFUL OPTIONS

Not all beans are green. Some French beans and some climbing beans have purple flowers and dark purple pods that can add colour to the garden and to your menus. Most purple beans will almost always turn green when cooked. While many runner beans have glorious red

flowers (and in fact these plants were originally grown for their ornamental value), some runner beans have bright white flowers too. A mixture of red and white flowers will introduce more colour to the garden and may attract different pollinators too. There is even a crimson flowered broad bean that is especially attractive and will contrast with the more common white flowered varieties. Some beans like the Borlotti beans have fabulously splashed pods in hues of creams and ruby red and it is these beans that generate good seeds for dried beans. Perfect for drying and storing for winter use, dried beans can be used in soups and stews, and for refried bean recipes.



MANY VARIETIES

HEALTHY VEGETABLES

Step by Step

For the best results sow your seeds into individual, deep modules or sow several into a 1-litre pot.

- 1 Fill your pots or modules with a quality seed sowing compost.
- 2 Make holes in the compost that are twice the length of the bean seeds, using a dibber or a pencil. One hole per module or five holes for each 1-litre pot is about right.
- 3 Drop one-bean seed into each hole with the narrow end uppermost, so that they are tall rather than wide in the compost, this helps reduce the chance of the seeds rotting.
- 4 Cover over the seeds with a little more compost and water gently with slightly tepid water.
- 5 Keep the compost moist but not sodden. Depending on the temperature the seeds will germinate and send up seed leaves in 1-3 weeks.
- 6 When your plants are large enough to handle they can be planted out into the garden or into the final pots and containers. Remember, runner beans, French beans and climbing beans must not be planted outside until all risk of frost has passed.



Bean tips

To keep your plants cropping pick the pods young before the beans inside start to swell. Once the plant 'thinks' it has set seed, it will stop producing flowers and your supply of beans will dry up. Plant a few bean seeds later in the season. A June sowing of runner beans won't need protection from the frost and will crop right into autumn with tasty, sweeter pods. If you are short on space grow your beans up a wigwam of canes or hazel sticks. At the end of the season leave a few beans on the plant to set seed. Once mature these can be dried, stored and used to grow a crop of bean plants next year.



Bean know-how

Most of the beans that we grow in the garden are not frost hardy, which means if you sow and grow the seeds before the last frost (usually late May or early June in most areas) you will need to keep your seeds, seedlings and resulting plants frost free until it is safe to plant them out. This applies to climbing French and runner beans (sometimes called string beans) and dwarf beans and means sowing them in a protected space such as a greenhouse. Sow these beans from April to June (see step by step). Later sown plants (sown in June) often have sweeter tastier pods. If you need a constant supply of beans sow a few every two weeks from April. Broad beans are the exception. These are not just hardy, but they can and will survive the harsh cold and wet of winter and can even be sown and grown in the autumn to provide an earlier crop of tasty



WHITE BEANS



BLACK BEANS



GREEN BEANS

Health matters

Green beans are a healthy food source offering antioxidant properties to support health and they have cardiovascular benefits too. Beans are rich in vitamins, fibre and many beneficial minerals and micronutrients and green beans are low in calories. Steam the beans for the very best flavour and to preserve as many of their healthy nutrients.



Easy 2 grow

Beans of all types are easy to grow and germinate fairly quickly from seed. These instructions apply to all types of beans but remember that only broad bean plants are hardy, all of the others will need to be kept frost free until all danger of frost has passed. Sow these in April or May for the best results.

