



J&L's Gardening Handouts

Tips and Suggestions for Year Round Gardening

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Bean Care and Descriptions



Beans are a tender, warm season vegetable that ranks second to tomatoes in popularity in home gardens. Bush Beans stand erect without support. They yield well and require the least amount of work. Green bush beans were formerly called "string beans" because of the fiber that developed along the seams of the pods. Plant breeders have reduced these fibers through selection, and green beans are now just referred to as "snap beans." Pole Beans climb supports and are easily harvested. Pole beans generally produce a larger crop than bush beans.

There are many different varieties of Beans to choose from. Which variety is the best? That is a very hard question because there is not 'One Best Variety of Bean', there are a lot of best varieties. Listed below are many of the varieties that we have available in 'Bulk Packs'. We also have these varieties, and a few other varieties, available in smaller seed packages from *Mountain Valley Seed Company*, *Burpee Seed Company*, and from *Lake Valley Seed Company*.

Beans - Planting & Harvesting



Beans are a warm weather crop. Beans hate cold weather, especially the cold, wet soil. Wait to plant beans until a week or two after the last frost, or until the soil temperature is at least 60°F. Plant a crop of bush beans every two to three weeks from Mid-May until Late-July for an extended harvest season. You can even plant a crop of beans in the same garden area where you removed your early crop of peas.

If you plant bean seeds too early, they may rot if the soil is too wet and cold for quick germination. Be sure to dust seeds with a fungicide, such as **captan**, if you want to try planting seeds while the soil is still cold and wet.

Bean seeds tend to crack and germinate poorly if the soil's moisture content is too high. Wait until the soil is slightly dry before planting beans. **For this same reason, never soak bean seeds before planting.** Instead, water heavily just after planting.

Plant bean seeds one inch deep. Plant bush beans about 2" to 3" apart and space rows 18" to 24" apart. After germination, thin bush beans to 4" to 5" apart. One pound of bush bean seeds plants approximately 100' to 150' row.

Plant pole beans about 4" to 6" apart and space the rows 3' to 4' apart. After germination, thin pole beans to 6" to 8" apart. Pole beans can grow 5' to 7' tall, so make sure you provide adequate support for them. Pole beans take longer to ripen than bush beans, but they will produce a longer and a larger harvest than bush beans.

Bean plants form new flowers and produce more beans if you continually harvest beans before they start to mature.

Beans and peas are 'nitrogen fixing' plants. This means that these two vegetables can take nitrogen out of the air and 'fix it' into the soil for all plants to use. Bean and pea plants must have a special bacteria to help them complete the process.

One of the best ways to help beans and peas to grow faster, and to produce larger crops, is to inoculate the seeds with a 'nitrogen fixing' bacteria right when you plant them.

Harvest fresh beans before they become tough and stringy. If you can see the bulge of a developing bean through the green pod, the bean is over-mature and should be shelled (except pole beans). At this stage the pod is too tough to eat.

Planting garden beans in two week intervals helps to eliminate having all the beans ready for harvest at the same time.

Fresh pole beans and bush beans can be stored, unwashed in plastic bags in the vegetable crisper of the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Do not wash them before storing. Wet beans will develop black spots and decay quickly. Wash beans just before preparation.

Bean Varieties



Blue Lake Bush Bean 58 days - Plants grow 18" tall. Long, smooth pods are 5" to 6.5" long. White seeds. Plants will tolerate cool soil conditions, plant 1 to 2 weeks after last frost. The seeds and fiber are slow to develop so the bean stays tender longer and the flavor is long lasting. Young pods have best flavor.

Blue Lake Pole Bean 63 days -heirloom. Plants grow 5' to 7' tall. Produces a very high yield of stringless, dark-green beans. Pods 6" to 7" long. Good fresh, frozen and canned. Produces a longer and larger yield than bush beans.

Golden Wax Bean 55 days - Yellow beans with stringless, straight, slightly flattened pods. Vigorous plants grow 15" to 18" tall. White seeds with brown eye. Very productive and extremely flavorful.

Harvester Bean 53 Days -Heirloom. Tender pods are 5 to 6 inches long, round and smooth. Pods are set high on hardy, upright plants for good mechanical harvesting. White seeds.

Kentucky Blue Pole Bean 58 days. Open Pollinated AAS Winner. Pods are 6 to 7 inches long. Combines the best qualities of Blue Lake Pole and Kentucky Wonder Pole. Continues to produce until frost if kept well picked. White seeds.



Kentucky Wonder Pole 65 days -heirloom. Plants grow 5' to 7' tall. Pods 7" to 9" long. Beans have an excellent distinctive flavor. They are stringless when harvested young. Good shell bean when fully mature. Produces a large yield of fruit.

Roma II 60 days. Pods are 5" to 6" long, fairly wide, smooth and flat. Seeds and fiber are slow to develop which makes it a nice gourmet bean. Plants grow 14" to 18" tall and are easy to pick. If harvested regularly they will produce for several weeks.

Royal Burgundy 52 days - Pods are long, stringless, and tender. Purple pods turn green after cooking. Will grow fairly well in cool soil conditions.



Slenderette 53 days - Plants grow 20" tall. Pods are 5" long, stringless, slender and very tender. Has white seeds. Excellent for freezing, canning and for eating fresh. Plants produce heavily.

Tendercrop 56 days - Beans are 5" to 6" long. Meaty, stringless and tender pods are excellent fresh or frozen. Seeds are mottled purple.

Tendergreen 58 days -Heirloom. Strong erect plant bears 5 1/2 to 6" long stringless pods. Brownish-purple seeds. Outstanding flavor. Heavy yields even in hot weather

Topcrop 50 - 54 days -heirloom. A choice variety for eating fresh, frozen, or canned. Widely adaptable variety. Round 5.5" to 6" long pods. Brown Seeds. Pods are meaty, fiberless, stringless, and tender. Consistent producer.

Top Notch 50 to 55 days -heirloom. Improved golden wax type. Stringless, straight, slightly flattened pods of light-yellow. Vigorous plants grow 15 to 18 inches tall. White seed with brown eye, very productive.

Henderson Lima Bean 70 days. Heirloom An old-time favorite used for canning, freezing and dry. The seeds dry to a creamy white. The erect, bushy plants are reliable and set pods until frost.



Windsor Fava Bean 120 to 150 days - Upright plants grow 2' to 3' tall. Pods are 7" long and contain 5 or 6 big, flat beans. Prefers cool weather, plant as early as possible. Pods can be sliced and eaten like snap beans or they can be shelled and cooked separately. Has an unusual 'nutty-pea' flavor. New foliage tips can be pinched and eaten in salads.



Scarlet Runner bean 60 to 90 Days. Heirloom variety. Grows vigorously and is a good producer. The vines can grow to 18'. It is attractive to hummingbirds and pollinator insects. It is good when harvested young as a snap bean, or mature as a shelled or dry bean. Raw beans contain a poisonous lectin which is neutralized with thorough cooking. The seeds are large and purple in color, sometimes lavender, mottled with black.



Edamame Soybean

Edamame are young soybeans, usually still in their pod. Because the beans are young and green when they are picked, edamame soybeans are soft and edible, not



hard and dry like the mature soybeans which are used to make soy milk and tofu, and are more tender and less oily than the livestock feed soybeans.



Edamame can be steamed and then eaten out of the pod. They taste a little bit savory, salty, and have a unique flavor. They are excellent alone, or added into dishes such as stir-fry or dips. They are a vegetable, yet a half a cup serving has 9 grams of protein, 5 grams of fiber and only 120 calories. Also, the protein contains all 9 essential amino acids making it an excellent meat substitute.

Plants grow best in warm climates and in warm soil conditions, so do not plant them too early. Soybean seed germination is sensitive to water content in soil. Seeds can easily rot and fail to germinate if over-watered or even soaked before planting.

Edamame soybean plants are among the fastest growing, most productive, and least insect- or disease-prone of all vegetables. They are super tough in drought conditions, in clay soil, and in some shade. Soybean makes a great addition to either a standard vegetable garden or in an edible landscape.

BeSweet Soybean 80 to 90 days - produces clusters of pods with 2 to 3 green beans in each. Pick the pods when they are plump but still green (before they turn yellow). All pods on the plants are harvested at the same time. Start seeds at several different times, so you can have continuous harvests of Edamame beans.



Questions & Answers

Q. My beans appear healthy, but not many beans have formed. Why not?

A. The blossoms drop and fail to form pods during periods of hot, dry winds. Hot weather (above 95°F) and dry soil conditions also cause the plants to shed flowers.



Q. Is it necessary to plant beans in a different area of the garden each year?

A. Yes. Beans are subject to diseases that may carry over in the soil to reinfest the following bean crop. Crop rotation is a good practice for all vegetables and flowers.

Q. Why do bean pods get stringy?

A. Stringy beans are evidence of heat or water stress. Fibers in the pods form during stress making them stringy.



Q. Will bean varieties cross pollinate in my garden?

A. Because the flowers are largely self-pollinated, bean varieties usually do not cross. These crosses show up only when seed is saved from cross-pollinated flowers.

Q. Can I still use beans from my garden that have matured past the green, edible stage?

A. Yes. Snap beans (pole or bush) may be harvested for shellouts and for dry beans; and Lima beans may be harvested for butter beans.

Q. Why do some snap bean varieties have white seeds?

A. Most bean varieties are developed for the canning and freezing industry. When varieties with colored seeds are used, the cooking water is slightly off-color. White seed is preferred because it does not discolor the cooking water.

