

GROWING BEANS

Beans are one of the *easiest* and most rewarding vegetables to grow in your garden. The difference in the taste between a grocery store bean and one hand picked from an organic garden is like night and day.

Try growing fresh string pole beans like '**Kentucky Wonder**' or '**Blue Lake Pole**' on a trellis; they've got a nice "snap" to them and taste amazing fresh or cooked. If you want to fill a tall trellis in no time with a beautiful flower and tender edible bean, try '**Scarlet Emperor**'. If you have less room, then try a shorter, though no less flavorful bush bean, such as '**Jade**' or '**Nugget**'.

Another gourmet bean must-have is the French or Filet variety (also known as "haricots verts") which is pencil-slim with a delicate flavor. Both '**Nickel**' and '**Maxibel**' are perfect for Northwest growers.

For soups or canning varieties, there are Italian or Romano-type beans which are flat and seldom sold even at farmers' markets. In colors of green, golden yellow, or purple, these broad, juicy, fleshy beans could easily become your favorite. The purple-podded beans keep their color when sliced raw for salads, but turn dark green when cooked.

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Growing any of these beans is a snap. The large, easy-to-handle seeds germinate in only 7 to 14 days. Pole bean plants, which grow up to 8 feet tall, must have support and they reach maturity in 60 to 70 days and produce over a long season.

- **Timing:** Wait until nighttime temperatures remain at 55° or higher to plant. Start indoors in May or directly outdoors in June.
- **Preparation:** Amend the top 6 to 8 inches of soil with compost or other organic matter.
- **Planting:** Sow seeds 1½ inches deep and 4 inches apart. Give pole beans a trellis or tepee to climb on, or grow them against a wire fence; plant four to six seeds about 4 inches from each pole. After seedlings emerge, thin to the strongest three.
- **Watering:** Water well at planting time, then sparingly until seedlings sprout. After that, plants need about 1 inch of water a week, whether from nature or you.
- **Feeding:** Fertilize with fish emulsion or Dr. Earth Organic Vegetable Food every few weeks.
- **Diseases:** To discourage mildew and other maladies, avoid harvesting or handling plants when they're damp with dew or rain.
- **Pests:** Mexican beetles can be a problem in some areas. Consider planting plants like dill, radishes or tansy, which will attract natural predators.
- **Harvesting:** Gently pull ripe beans individually off the clusters.