

## **Green Beans**

For 9/28/07 SVH

Green beans are one of the most popular home garden crops in the Pacific Northwest. A kid-favorite, they'll scramble up trellises or produce in bush form for as long as warmer weather persists.

Beans like toasty soil and will not germinate if the soil temperature is below 60 degrees; the best soil temperature is 65 degrees or more. Like most garden vegetables, beans prefer well drained soil in a sunny location.

To prepare a garden plot for beans, work the soil to about 8 inches deep and break up the clods. Remove all weeds and rake the area smooth. Next, apply fertilizer and mix it into the top 3 to 4 inches of soil—but go easy on the nitrogen. Too much nitrogen will give you many leaves and not many bean pods, so choose a fertilizer with “10-20-10” on the bag.

Plant your seeds about 1 inch deep. Bush bean seeds should be spaced about 2 inches apart; pole bean seeds should be spaced 2 to 3 inches apart. Rows should be about 4 feet apart; trellises, bean hoops or tripods—for the pole beans—also should be about 4 feet apart.

Bean roots are near the surface, so they need about a quarter-inch of water per day during hot weather. A soaker or drip hose will help you achieve this amount easily and will also prevent the leaves from getting wet.

Your beans should be ready to pick about 2 weeks after they flower. The more you pick the more they produce, and the longer your harvest will be. A 20-foot row should feed a family of four. Plant more to can, pickle or freeze.

When it comes to beans, there's more out there than the standard green. Beans come in all shapes and in a variety of colors and tastes. They are very versatile. They can be eaten raw, steamed, baked, dried, pickled and even fried. Even some of the names sound interesting.

Like bush beans? Try Jade (dark green), Dragon Tongue (buff yellow with bright purple stripes), Royal Burgundy (violet-purple) and Ramo Gold (yellow). For pole beans and runner beans there are the all-time favorites Blue Lake Pole and Kentucky Wonder and their offshoot Kentucky Blue, along with Violet Podded Stringless.

A nice colorful asset for your garden is Scarlet Runner or Sunset. These are both runner beans and should be picked when the beans are just starting to form in the pods. Or they can be used as dried beans in chili, soups or refried beans.

## Pickled dilled beans

Try this recipe to lend new flavor to an old standby.

### Ingredients:

- 4 lbs. fresh green or yellow beans, 5 to 6 in. long
- 8 to 16 heads of fresh dill
- 8 cloves of garlic
- ½ cup of canning or pickling salt
- 4 cups of white vinegar (5% acid)
- 4 cups of water
- 1 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes

Wash and trim ends from the beans and cut into 4-in. lengths. In each pint jar, place 1 to 2 dill heads and two cloves of garlic. Place whole green beans upright into the pint jars. Leave half an inch of space at the top of each jar (trim beans to fit if necessary).

Combine salt, water, vinegar and red pepper flakes in pot, and bring to a boil. Pour liquid over beans, leaving half an inch of space at the top of each jar. Adjust lids and place jars into water bath canner. Process jars 5 minutes in boiling water if your elevation is 1,000 feet or under; 10 minutes for elevations between 1,000 and 6,000; and 15 minutes for elevations above 6,000 feet.

Remove jars from canner and let them cool, then label and date each jar. You should have about eight pints. Give your dilly beans time to pickle, then enjoy the fruits of your labor.

Remember: When canning green beans, don't cut corners. Green beans *must* be pressure canned to be safe. You may leave out both the garlic and the red pepper flakes, but try the garlic and pepper flakes at least once. For more information about preserving your harvest, can call the WSU Bulletin Office at 1-800-723-1763 or go online at [bulletin@wsu.edu](mailto:bulletin@wsu.edu) or <http://pubs.wsu.edu/>.

### RESOURCES

- Easy Gardening: Green beans. Sam Cotner & Jerry Parsons, Extension Horticulturists, Texas Agriculture Extension Service
- PNW 355 Pickling Vegetables
- Territorial Seed catalog, spring 2007, pp. 2–11
- *Carrots Love Tomatoes: Secrets of Companion Planting for Successful Gardening*, by Louise Riotte, Storey Publishing, 1998