

Beans, Pole



Nutritional Value:

Beans are one of the most important sources of protein for various cultures worldwide. They are also a good source of fiber, complex carbohydrates, and folate, (a B-vitamin critical to the production and maintenance of new cells.)

Challenges / Advantages:

Pole beans are incredibly easy to grow. They don't take up much room if grown up a trellis on the north or east side of any bed. So they are a great crop for smaller garden spaces. Pole beans come in many popular varieties, all having their own unique flavor, shape and color. Beans, with the help of populations of bacteria in their root nodules, can add nitrogen to the soil. It actually improves the soil it has grown in, which makes it a great crop to rotate throughout the garden.

Sowing:

Pole beans are planted in rows along the bottom of a trellis. The trellis can take many forms (see video on building trellis) from tepees, to grids made of wood, wire, string, mesh, bamboo--you name it, and pole beans will climb it. Beans are rarely transplanted, and are direct sown instead. After last frost date, sow pole beans at 6-8" centers in rows along the trellis and 1" deep. One easy way is to lay each bean in place on the bed until the arrangement looks right and spacings are even. Then press each one an inch into the soil with a finger and cover the hole with soil. To ensure maximum numbers, you can sow at higher density and thin to the appropriate spacing once plants come up. When you thin, do so by pinching the bean stem at the soil surface. Don't pull them up by the roots since this may disturb roots of the neighboring seedlings. Beans can be soaked in a wet paper towel overnight to accelerate germination the day before planting. Rolling the wet beans in commercially purchased bean inoculant right before sowing in the soil can increase yields significantly. The inoculant is usually only necessary in new beds that don't have the specific bean nodule bacteria in the soil yet.

Soil prep:

Beans need well-drained soil with a pH above 6.0. They have a much harder time in highly acidic soil. Optimal soil temperature for germination is 70-90 degrees. And lots of organic matter in the soil helps. Add 2" of compost and work into the top 6" of soil before planting. The extra nitrogen in the compost will help establish the beans until they start fixing their own nitrogen once the bacteria get busy in their roots. Without an initial supply of nitrogen, the young beans may take a while to get moving, as the bacteria need time to get established. So give them a head start with the compost, but don't add high-nitrogen concentrated fertilizer amendments to

beans because they won't fix nitrogen in their roots if too much is already present in the soil.

Growing Conditions:

All types of beans like a warm sunny spot.

Make sure you don't plant them until all danger of frost has past. Keep the young beans weeded until they become more established. Healthy pole beans can climb an eight foot trellis easily, so make sure you give it enough height.

Planting tips:

Beans may actually do better if you wait a few weeks after last frost date instead of planting right away. The reason is that they germinate faster in warmer soils, up around 80 degrees. So the closer you get to that temperature, the more robust their early growth will be. If they are planted in soil that is too cold, they may not germinate at all and can succumb to rot. Raised beds tend to warm up earlier in the season and are good places to plant any kind of bean because of this temperature advantage.

Watering:

Keep soil evenly moist but don't overwater. A mulch layer is helpful at the base of pole beans.

Harvest:

Once bean pods are plump and just before you can see the soft outline of beans inside, taste a few to see if they're ready. They should be crisp but not tough. The best time to harvest is early morning when their moisture content is highest and during cool temperatures. Harvest beans regularly to encourage new pod growth. If you miss some older beans, harvest them anyway to keep the plant producing. Bean plants will stop producing once some of their seeds get to full maturity. So don't let them. Pick them as they grow. Hold the branch on the trellis and pull down on the pod to minimize damage to the host plant. The harvest period can last up to three weeks with some varieties.

Notes:

Bush beans are usually more productive than bush beans since they have a larger leaf canopy-to-bean ratio, so more photosynthesis is available. They usually have a longer harvest period and fend off pests easier since so much of their growth takes place a fair distance above many soil-borne pests.

Cooking:

The best flavor of green beans is experienced in the fresh, raw state. They can also be steamed or boiled gently. Of course there are hundreds of ways to cook beans, so be creative. I still think they are far better eaten fresh than cooked. That way you can experience the true taste of summer in the garden.



Storage:

Green beans can be stored for two weeks in plastic bags in the refrigerator. They can be canned, pickled, or frozen successfully for long-term storage

Good Varieties: Kentucky Wonder, Scarlet Runner, Lazy Wife, Marvel of Venice, Garden of Eden

Copyright © 2014 Round House Productions, Inc.
All Rights Reserved