

How to Grow Your Own French Beans

French beans are delicious, decorative and easy to grow. The plants produce plenty of fleshy beans that are ideal for those who don't like 'stringy' runner beans.

There are two main types of French beans: climbing and dwarf. Climbing varieties need tying to canes, while bushy dwarf beans are ideal for a small garden. Plus try new colourful varieties with cream, yellow, purple and speckled pods. They are decorative enough to grow in a flower border.

Sowing

- Prepare the soil well in autumn – [here is a guide](#)
- Two weeks before sowing, rake the seed bed and add general purpose fertiliser
- Sow seeds 4cm deep and 20cm apart, in rows 45cm apart. Water in
- Sow climbing varieties in double rows for traditional triangular cane supports, or in squares for wigwams
- Dwarf plants only grow to 45cm tall, so grow them near other plants for support. Space plants 15cm apart
- Do not sow before the recommended time - French beans are not hardy and dislike cold weather or frosts

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Sow						●	●					
Harvest								●	●	●	●	

How to look after me

Soil: Any except heavy/acid

Position: Warm and sunny

Location: Outdoors, container

Did You Know?

French beans are not actually French! They are native to South America, and were introduced to France by the Spanish Conquistadors



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Growing

- Protect seedlings from slugs and remove weeds regularly
- Support bean plants as they grow. For climbing beans, push 1.8m bamboo canes into the ground near the plants and tie at the top to make a triangle
- Tie each pair of canes to a horizontal cane running along the top
- To make a wigwam, create a pyramid shape with four canes spaced 15cm apart, all tied together at the top
- Loosely tie the plants to the cane as they grow
- If the weather turns dry during or after the flowering period, water copiously
- Apply a mulch of well-rotted manure or mushroom compost in July to keep soil moist

Harvesting

- Start to pick pods when they are at least 10cm long
- The pods are ready when they snap easily and the shape of the bean is becoming visible inside the pod
- Don't tug the beans off or you may loosen the plant's roots. Cut pods off with scissors instead
- Pick regularly to encourage the plant to continue cropping



David's Top Tip
Once you have harvested all the pods, water the plant and add plenty of liquid fertiliser. This should give you a second crop of smaller but still tasty beans

- If you want to store dried beans (haricots) for winter, leave the pods on the plant until they become straw-coloured
- Hang indoors to dry. When they become brittle and start to split, shell the beans and dry on paper for a few days
- Store in an air-tight container