

How to Grow Your Own Runner Beans

Runner beans are one the most popular vegetable crops in Britain, and so easy to grow. They can be seen climbing up supports and wigwams across the country throughout summer. Their pretty flowers also make them a addition to the flower border.

The only hard work with runner beans is harvesting them regularly! If you stop picking, they stop producing. And picking the pods young stops them becoming stringy. Keep on top of gluts by freezing the surplus.

Did You Know?

Runner beans originated in South America and have been grown there for over 2000 years!

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Sow



Harvest



How to look after me

Soil: Rich. Dislikes acid

Position: Sunny, partial shade

Location: Outdoors, container

Sowing

- Prepare the soil well in autumn – [here is a guide](#)
- Two weeks before sowing, rake the seed bed and add general purpose fertiliser
- Put in supports. For a traditional double row, push sturdy 2.4m bamboo canes into the ground, sloping towards each other and tie at the top to make a triangle
- The canes along each row should be 22cm apart and the rows should be 45cm apart
- For wigwams, push four canes into the ground in a square and tie at the top to make a pyramid shape
- Sow a seed or plant a young runner bean 5cm deep at the base of each cane

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Growing

- Protect seedlings from slugs and remove weeds regularly
- Tie the young plants loosely to the canes as they grow. Once established, they will climb unaided
- If the weather turns dry during or after the flowering period, water copiously
- Apply a mulch in July to keep soil moist
- Once the plants reach the top of the supports, pinch out the growing tips
- Most people have no trouble with runner beans, but if your plants don't set, try watering them well and misting foliage and flowers
- If your soil is neutral to acidic, try watering with hydrated lime

Harvesting

- Start to pick pods when they are more than 15cm long
- Pick before the beans start to visibly swell inside the pods
- Pick every couple of days and harvesting should continue for up to eight weeks
- Freeze gluts. Wash and chop the beans, then blanch for two minutes, drain and freeze

David's Top Tip

Once you have harvested all the pods, dig the roots and stem bases back into the soil to add nitrogen for the next crop

