

Green Beans – String ‘em Along

Green beans are nutritious, easy to grow and a good choice for first-time gardeners.

- Varieties are grown either as a bush or pole (vines).
- Days to harvest range from 50 to 80 days depending on type of variety.
- They can be grown in containers but lack of space may reduce harvest.

Plant site:

- Seeds or starts can be planted outside when the soil reaches 65 degrees.
- Select beans with the shortest growing season for Western Washington.
- Grow beans in fertile, well-drained soils with high levels of organic matter and minimum of 6 hours, full sun exposure.

Pole Beans:

- Pole beans need ample support of a trellis or pole system.
- Plant 6 to 8 seeds around the base of the pole or space 1 inch apart along a trellis.
- Sow seeds one inch deep with rows 3 feet apart.

Bush Beans:

- Sow seeds about one inch deep and two inches apart in rows 18 to 24 inches apart.
- Support for bush beans is not needed.

Planting, Water & Maintenance Needs:

- Start seeds indoors ten days to two weeks prior to planting outside.
 - Transplant seedlings into the garden in late spring.
- Directly sow beans into the garden late in the spring.
- Beans have moderate water needs in the beginning of growth.
 - Water will possibly need to be increased during the heat of summer.
 - Water bean plants at the roots to prevent fungus growth.
 - Moisture levels near the root zone/area of the plant should be moist and pliable, not dry and crumbly, or wet/dripping.
- Sign of low soil nutrition are stunted plants with pale leaves or plants that fail to bloom or set fruit.

Pollination/Flowering:

- Bean flowers are self-pollinating (both male and female parts are on the same plant).
- Bean flowers depend on bees and insects to transfer the pollen.
- Avoid pesticide use during flower bloom to encourage bee and insect visitation.

Common Problems:

Caution: Before treating your plants, be absolutely certain what the problem is. Using proper growing techniques such as fertilizing when needed, keeping water off leaves, and keeping dead plant material cleaned up goes a long way to successful gardening.

Powdery Mildew: A fungal disease that attacks the leaves, pods, and stems, with white mats of powdery fungal growth. Actions include:

- Use raised beds or add organic matter to soil to help improve drainage.
- Practice good watering strategies. Do not overwater, especially in heavy soils.
- Remove and discard diseased plants (do not compost).

Slugs – Common garden pests in Washington. Plants’ older leaves appear chewed & younger leaves may be totally consumed. Often there is a silvery shine to the plant. Action:

- Handpick and kill slugs when noticed (they usually feed at night).
- Trap slugs with containers of stale beer sunk into the ground. These need to be emptied often.
- Use chemical baits with caution as pets can be poisoned. Iron phosphate-based baits are safer for pets. Read the label for correct usage and dosage.

Bean Aphids: Small pear-shaped, dark green to black insects that feed on the shoot tips & leaves.

- Wash aphids from plants with a strong stream of water
- Provide proper nutrition to the plants. Healthier plants can withstand some insect infestation. Switch to a slow release or low-nitrogen fertilizer as high levels of nitrogen encourages aphid reproduction.

Harvesting:

- Harvest green beans before they start to bulge.
- If picked when bulging, use the shelled beans. They are starchier but can be used for cooking.
- Harvest by removing pods from the bean vines one-quarter inch above the fruit.
- Frequent picking of green beans is essential for good growth and optimum quality.

Resources:

Container Vegetable Gardening: WSU – Pierce County Extension Fact sheet:

https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2088/2017/04/Container-Vegetable-Gardening_RS004-2010.pdf

Growing Green Beans in Home Gardens. Washington State University Publication:

<https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/vegetables-growing-green-beans-in-home-gardens-home-garden-series>

Growing the Legume Family: WSU – Snohomish County Extension Growing Groceries Program:

<https://extension.wsu.edu/snohomish/legumes/>

Home Vegetable Gardening in Washington. Washington State University Publication:

<https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/home-vegetable-gardening-in-washington-home-garden-series>

WSU Hortsense Fact Sheets for pest issues:

<http://hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/Search/SeachByPlantCategory.aspx>

*Prepared by WSU – Snohomish County Extension Master Gardeners
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