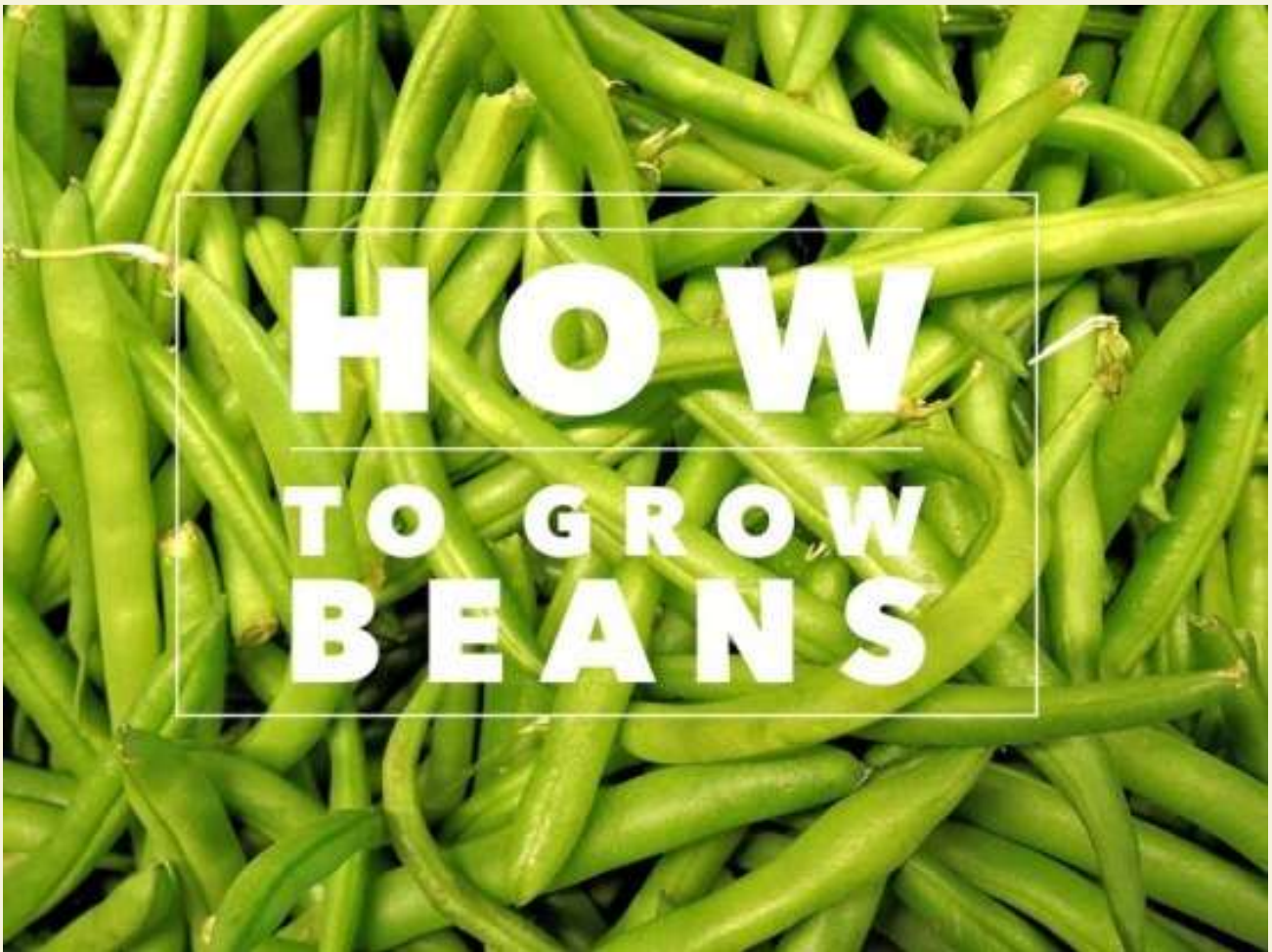


The East London Garden Society

Plant Facts

How to Grow Beans



Preferred Growing Conditions

For a better yield, give beans full sun. Some climbing varieties can handle a little shade but make sure they still have at least six hours of unfiltered sunlight. Beans need soil to be well drained, with plenty of phosphorous and calcium. The pH level should be around 6.5 to avoid the soil blocking the absorption of phosphorous and calcium by being too alkaline or acidic.

How to Plant Beans

Beans grow as bushes or vines. Bush beans do not need any support and don't need a lot of space. These beans are ideal for containers. Climbing beans, or pole beans, need support. Beans grow well from seed and make sure soil temperatures are about 60 degrees Fahrenheit, and it is one to two weeks past the last frost.

Bush beans: Check the specific variety, but for most bush beans, plant the seeds two to three inches apart in eighteen-inch spaced rows. Thin seedlings three to size inches apart after they are established.

Climbing beans: Climbing beans will need more space to grow. Plant seeds eight to ten inches apart and after the seedlings establish, thin them. Some climbing varieties need to be spaced thirty-six inches apart and remember to provide a five to eight-foot trellis or structure for the beans to climb on.

Hill planting works well with vegetables that grow on vines, including beans. Plant bean hills three feet apart and plant about three seeds at the bottom of each pole on a tee-pee structure.

Some plants are bad for the health of bean plants, so avoid the following plants around beans: tomatoes, chili peppers, sunflowers, onions, garlic, kale, cabbage, and broccoli.

Maintaining Bean Plants

In addition to watering, train vines for climbing bean varieties by guiding them onto the poles and secure vines to the supports with garden twine. However, the vines will grow quickly, working themselves around the poles on their own. Mulch is important around bean plants because it keeps the moisture in the soil and away from the plants. Mulch also helps prevent diseases that develop from too much moisture. Plant more beans every two to three weeks. The plants will produce beans for about two months so by staggering planting dates, you can have fresh beans throughout the growing season.

Harvesting

Snap Beans: Pick snap beans whilst tender when the pods are full sized. They can be enjoyed fresh from the garden or they can be frozen for future use.

Dry or Shell Beans: Pick dry or shell beans when the seeds inside the shells are full size. They can be enjoyed fresh, or they can be dried after shelling them for future use. An easy way to harvest shell beans is not to pick them and let them dry on the bean plant but make sure they are completely dry to avoid mould. If you don't completely dry them, freeze or can them.

Pests and Diseases

Keep a close watch for the following insects and garden pests: aphids, cutworms, spider mites, nematodes, and rabbits. Be sure to use an organic pest control method around beans, since it is a food source. Common bean diseases to watch out for are anthracnose, rust, powdery mildew, and bean mosaic virus.