

HOW TO GROW-RUNNER BEANS

Fun fact- Once picked, runner beans will keep in the fridge for 2-3 days, but, as they are part of the 'legume' family, the sugar in the beans starts to turn to starch after picking and they are best eaten or frozen as soon as possible

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Basic growing information

- Sowing indoors-Mid April-May in deep pots
- Plant out late May when the soil has warmed
- Growth requirements
 - No frost
 - Temperatures of 14-29 celsius for growth
 - Full sun
 - Support such as a wigwam, trellis.


HOW TO SOW THEM

Runner beans are legumes and most, if not all legumes have long tap roots. This is important to know when growing and sowing your plant so you can prepare the soil for this and so you can choose the right pot for sowing your seed in.

The best pot will be a deep one to accommodate the roots such as root trainers or a homemade version such as a toilet roll tube.

Sow the beans on their side about 3cm deep. They can be sown in multipurpose compost and will germinate in about 7-10 days.

Before planting them out you will need to harden your plants off- this means just getting them accustomed to the outside world and temperatures so it's not a shock to them. To do this, take them to your cold frame or keep them out in the day and take them in at night for a week or so.



ERECTING SUPPORTS FOR RUNNER BEANS

Support made from canes or branches that are about 3 metres tall and tied on the top with strong twine. Make sure they are in enough at the soil to allow them to support the weight.


Make them into a wigwam shape or a long A-frame.

PLANTING THEM OUT

Plant them out when all risk of frost has passed and soil has warmed up; about late May to early June.

Plant them at the bottom of a cane on the support you have built for them. In a wigwam they only have to be 15cm apart but otherwise plant them 60cm apart in double rows.

Water them in well and mulch them with what you have available i.e leaf mould, garden compost or mushroom compost - this will degrade and give extra nutrients whilst also providing extra moisture for the roots.



If you wanted to -and are able, dig a bean trench to plant your runner beans in, this just means digging a hole about 60 cm deep and 60 cm wide. Then adding well rotted manure, garden compost in the bottom then mix with the soil in the trench. Then adding some slow release fertiliser to the instructions on the packet such as chicken pellets, after all is done leave for a few weeks to let things 'settle' This is an old fashioned and traditional method allowing you to dig deep into the soil and turn it to incorporate more organic matter and nutrients.

An alternative method would be adding a thick top-dressing / mulch of rotted organic material of your choice in the autumn-spring time. This doesn't disturb the soil and increases microbial growth and activity. In the long term this method would be better. This is because it's increasing microorganisms moving in the soil and so improving the structure. This in turn increases the water and nutrient holding capabilities of the soil in the long term so better for the plant. The downside is that it takes patience and persistence but it will pay off.

AFTER CARE

PINCHING THEM OUT- runner beans, if not pinched when they reach a desirable height will keep growing and growing. The down side to this is that they will outgrow their supports and all their energies are going to getting taller, not flower/ pod production. When you pinch them out this will allow them to flower more often and you will get more pods.



CRITICAL WATERING PERIODS- runner beans are very thirsty plants, especially when flowering and developing their pods. It's very important to keep on top of this if you're wanting a good pod set.

Watering every 3-4 days- this will vary depending on your soil type. Just check it and if it looks light in color, dusty feels dry etc. water it well-enough to flood the plant as this will encourage deeper root growth. To help with the water demand you can mulch with straw, garden compost etc.

RUNNER BEAN TYPES

Dwarf - this type doesn't need any support. They produce lower quality beans compared to climbing beans and are more suited to container gardening or raised bed gardening.

Climbing - traditional variety that is heavy cropping and vigorous grower.

Any questions email us - CardenEden@orevalleyha.org.uk
