

BEANS AND PEAS

BEANS

Beans are easy to grow and rewarding to harvest. Whether you are looking for snap beans to pick fresh and put on the supper table the same day, or your own store of dried beans, you'll find numerous varieties and plant habits to fit your taste and garden space.

Beans are generally of two kinds: Snap beans, also called green beans, or shell beans. Snap beans are grown mostly for the pods, and eaten tender and green. Shell beans such as lima, kidney, pinto, and soy beans are grown for their protein-rich seeds that are eaten both fresh or dried, though usually dried.

Beans are also divided by growth habit. Bush types are 1-2' high and do well in garden rows. Pole bean types have twining vines that need support from cages, strings, trellises or chain-link fences.

Beans do not tolerate cold weather so sow seeds after the danger of frost. If growing beans for the first time in that spot, inoculate seeds with a bacterium that will help establishment. Plant 10-15 bush bean plants or 3-5 hill of pole beans per person. Plant bush varieties 3-6" apart in rows 2' apart. There are several strategies on planting pole beans. Plant under a tepee of poles, at a stake or in double rows with a string or trellis in-between. Don't let beans go dry, that reduces yield. Do not over-fertilize, beans grow best in average soil, since they are in the legume family. Watch for leaf-eating pests and water at ground level to discourage diseases.

Pick green beans when green and tender, before bumps form on the pod. Use scissors to harvest, especially on pole beans. The vines are easily damaged.

Pick shell beans for fresh eating when pods are tender. Daily picking encourages more production. To dry leave the pods on the plants till the beans rattle around inside the pods. Plants can also be cut off at the ground and hung upside down to dry.

Oakland carries a large variety of bean seeds in our garden centers. Check out unique and heirloom varieties in specialty catalogs.

Snap Varieties: Blue Lake, Kentucky Blue, Contender, Slender Bush, Gold Rush Yellow Wax, Royal Burgundy, Scarlet Runner.

Shell Types: Lima beans, Kidney beans, Great Northern beans, Navy beans, Pinto beans, Soy beans. Many varieties in each type.

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PEAS

On the flip side of seasonal veggies, are the peas. Whereas beans are damaged by cold weather, peas will be the first crop in the ground and the first harvested. They will shake off a light frost and actually will not grow in hot weather over 80 degrees. Peas are divided by harvest date, growth habit and fruit type.

Planting can be timed by the dates peas mature. There are extra early, early, mid season and late season types. By staggering planting dates, a continuous harvest of peas can be achieved to mid summer.

Bush type peas need little or no support and are ideal for row planting and raised beds. Pole or Vining peas need trellis, teepees, strings or chain link fences to grow on and generally are heavier producers than bush types.

The last way to classify peas is by pod type. Green peas or shell peas, are grown for the peas inside, and the pods are discarded after harvest. Snow peas are eaten as flat seedless pods. Snap peas have peas in them and are eaten whole, pod and all.

Grow peas in a full sun spot with average soil. Peas are legumes, hence they fix Nitrogen in the soil and do not respond well to heavy fertilizing. Grow 30 bush plants per person or 3-5 vines. Space similar to beans. Plant peas 4-6 weeks before last frost, or when soil is at least 40 degrees. Soak seeds for 24 hours in water to speed germination. Use a bacteria inoculants if planting peas for the first time in that garden spot.

Harvest peas daily to encourage continued production. For best flavor pick and eat immediately. Use scissors to harvest peas as the vines are delicate.

Aphid insects can be a problem on vines, as can powdery mildew. Read up on controls for these pest. Four-footed pests such as rabbits and mice can pillage pea plant quickly, so be ready with fencing if needed.

Green (shelled) Pea varieties: Green Arrow, Little Marvel, Early Frosty, Thomas Laxton.

Snap Peas: Sugar snap, Goliath, Sugar Daddy.

Snow peas: Dwarf Gray Sugar, Oregon Sugar, Mammoth Melting.