



## Beans are great addition to a fall garden

Did you know *Phaseolus vulgaris*, otherwise known as the common garden bean, is a celebrity? It is the National Garden Bureau's vegetable focus for 2021.

It's no wonder the garden bean is so popular. Garden beans can be traced back to their beginning in Central and South America when they were an original member of the "Three Sisters" – a companion planting of the first domesticated crops of maize, winter squash and climbing beans. These became the main agricultural crops used for trade and food for Native North Americans.

There are several types of garden beans gardeners likely are familiar with. Bush beans are the workhorse of the garden and a staple in the kitchen. Bush beans are compact and do well in both small garden patches or patio containers fitted with cages. Gardeners may want to grow mascotte or desperado varieties.

Pole beans, or vining beans, can be trained to grow up poles, trellises, netting or other supportive structure. With the right support system, pole beans can be grown in containers. A couple of varieties to consider are Seychelles or Kentucky Blue

Another popular type of bean is the filet bean, also known as French green bean. They are distinguished by elegant, ultra-slim pods. They're available in both bush and pole bean types.

Beans aren't difficult to grow, so they're a good choice even for the novice gardener. They're warm-weather vegetables and can be planted when the soil temperature is 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Because they're quick to mature – harvests can begin 50 to 60 days after sowing – they are a great addition to a fall garden. Plant now and you'll be harvesting before the weather gets cold. Bush beans will produce for about three weeks, while pole beans have a longer harvest at about six to eight weeks. If we experience a mild winter, gardeners could be harvesting into November.

Be sure to select a garden spot that drains well and gets at least eight hours of sun each day. Mulching around the plants will help provide consistent moisture, which results in the highest quality harvests.

Pick beans when the pods are young and tender. They'll snap when you bend them. Fresh, unwashed beans will last up to a week when stored in a reusable container or plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Not only are beans tasty and healthy, but they're also versatile. Try them raw, in a stir-fry, grilled, steamed or baked. Zip up the flavor with fresh herbs and spices, a splash of lemon juice or a bit of butter. You can even add a little bacon grease to the pot to kick it up a notch.

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