Bush & Pole-Type Snap Beans

Snap beans (Phaseolus vulgaris) are primarily warm-season crops that grow best at average temperatures between 60 and 75 °F. Snap beans can be tall-growing pole-type beans, half-runners, or the low-growing bush-type varieties. They are rapid growers that can produce large yields while requiring little attention.

Blue Lake 274 is a popular variety of bush-type green beans.

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Planting

Plant beans in full sun in fertile, well-drained soil. Select varieties that are resistant to bean common mosaic virus and anthracnose.

Bean seeds do not germinate well in cold soil, and the plants are killed by light frost. Do not plant beans before the soil temperature is at least 60 °F at the 4-inch depth. Plant in intervals of 10 to 14 days to have a continuous supply.

The Gold Rush bush bean is so tender that it can be eaten fresh.

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Plant bush-type beans in rows spaced 2 to 3 feet apart with the seed spaced 2 to 4 inches apart in the row. They can also be planted in a 4-foot-wide bed with two rows that are 18 inches apart. All beans should be planted 1 inch deep. It is best to use treated seed to help prevent seed rot, especially when seeds are planted early when the soil is cool.

Planting Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Fall</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bush-type and Half-runners</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>April 15-30</td>
<td>Aug. 1-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>April 1-15</td>
<td>Aug. 5-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>March 15-30</td>
<td>Aug. 15-30</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pole-type</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>April 15-30</td>
<td>July 15-25</td>
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Pole-type snap beans will require a sturdy trellis for support. Many types of homemade trellises work well as long as they provide the needed support. Trellises should be at least 6 to 8 feet tall and sturdy enough to withstand strong winds and rain.

One method of support is a teepee tripod with three wooden poles or large branches that are secured together at the top. Plant five or six seeds in a circle 6 to 8 inches from each pole.

Half-runner types have a growth habit between that of bush and pole beans. They produce runners that are about 3 feet long and are generally grown like bush beans. They may, however, produce higher yield if grown on a 3- to 4-foot trellis.

**Recommended Cultivars**
- Bush-type - Bush Blue Lake 274, Contender, Derby, Gold Rush, Provider, Red Swan, Resistant Cherokee Wax, Roma II, Tendercrop, Venture
- Pole-type – Blue Lake, Kentucky blue, Kentucky Wonder, Kentucky Wonder 191, Kwintus (Early Riser)
- Half-runner – Mountaineer White

Snap bean cultivars used should be resistant to bean common mosaic virus and anthracnose.

**Fertilizing**
Snap beans require moderate amounts of fertilizer. A soil test is always the best method of determining the fertilization needs of the crop. Information on soil testing is available in the fact sheet HGIC 1652, *Soil Testing*.

Follow the results of a soil test to maintain a soil pH between 5.8 and 6.5 and optimal fertility levels. If a soil test has not been taken, apply 5-10-10 at 3 pounds per 100 square feet before planting.

Sidedress snap beans and pole beans before the first bloom with 34-0-0 (ammonium sulfate and urea) at 1 pound per 100 feet of row or 2 pounds of 15.5-0-0 (calcium nitrate) per 100 feet of row. More frequent sidedressing may be required if the garden is sandy or if leaching rains occur.
Watering
Water the garden to provide a uniform moisture supply to the crop. The garden should be watered in the morning so the foliage is dry before dark. Water sufficiently to moisten the soil to a depth of 6 inches. Light sprinkles will encourage shallow rooting of the plants; therefore, watering less frequently but deeper will encourage a better root system. The critical period for moisture is during pod set and pod development.

Cultural Practices
Weed control is essential especially in the first six weeks after planting. Shallow cultivation and hand-pulling are the preferred methods to prevent root damage.

Harvest & Storage
Once beans begin to reach the picking stage, harvesting continues on a daily basis for days or even weeks with succession planting. Generally, snap beans will be ready to harvest 55 days after planting, depending on the variety selected.

Snap beans should be harvested before the enlarging seed can be seen through the pod, while the pods are still tender. Pods break easily with a “snap” when ready. To harvest beans, break off the stem above the cap. Quality is best if beans are harvested in early morning hours.

Beans are best when used as soon as possible after harvest, but they can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days if cooled immediately. This applies to freezing and canning as well. For best quality, canning and freezing should be done within a few hours after picking.

Problems
During hot weather when temperatures are above 90 °F, blossom drop may be a problem, especially for snap bean varieties such as Blue Lake 274. The plants will usually start setting more pods when the daily temperatures become cooler.

Common diseases include root rot, rust, and gray mold. For more information on green bean diseases, refer to the fact sheet HGIC 2200, Bean and Southern Pea Diseases.

Insect problems may include Mexican bean beetles, thrips, aphids, corn earworms, and stink bugs. For more information on green bean insects, refer to the fact sheet HGIC 2201, Bean and Southern Pea Insect Pests.

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