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## **i** INFORMATION SHEET

# French bean crop sheet

These are our top tips on how to grow French beans. They crop earlier than runner beans and can either grow on dwarf plants or as climbers.

**School term:** Late Spring, Early Summer, Late Summer

**Level of experience:** No experience needed

**Subject(s):** Science

## Sowing

**When:** April to June

### Indoors

1. Sow seeds individually in pots filled with compost, about 5cm deep.
2. Water well and place on a sunny windowsill or in a greenhouse or polytunnel. Water when the compost is dry.
3. When the risk of frost has passed where you are, harden the plants off before planting outdoors.

### Outdoors

1. Make a drill or channel in the soil 5cm deep. Use a **measuring stick** to keep it straight if using a trowel.
2. Sow the seeds about 6cm apart in the drill.
3. Cover the seeds and firm the soil with the back of a trowel. Water the drill, taking care to not disturb the soil too much.
4. Label the row, make another drill 45cm away and repeat the process.

## Growing

- If you are growing a climbing variety, they will need the support of a wigwam or other support structure from twigs or canes. The plants may need to be tied to the canes to begin with.
- Keep watering beans in dry weather and remove any weeds around the plants.
- Dwarf varieties are good to grow in a small bed or container.

## Harvesting

**When:** 9 weeks after sowing onwards

- Pick the pods when they are 10cm long or about the length of French beans sold in shops. Pods are ready when they snap easily and before the beans can be seen through the pod.
- Pick them by hand. Hold the plant with one hand and the pod with the other. Gently tug the pod downwards. Alternatively, cut pods off of the plants with scissors.
- By picking regularly you can encourage plants to crop for several weeks.

## Using

- French beans are suitable for freezing. Rinse in cold water and snap off the ends. Blanch in boiling water for 3 minutes before transferring to a bowl of iced or very cold water for 3 minutes. Arrange them in one layer on a baking sheet and freeze for 1-2 hours. After this time, they can be transferred to another freezer container and kept for up to 1 year.



## Varieties to try

- 'Black Beauty' - large crops of dark green fruits
- 'Soleil' - produces fruits with bright, yellow skins
- 'Tondo di Piacenza' - spherical, dark green fruits