



# COMMON (DRY) BEAN

## *Phaseolus vulgaris*

High in protein and good for the soil, dry beans are an important part of any crop rotation and healthy diet. Dry beans come in many shapes and colors and are fun to grow and process, especially with children.

### PLANTING

Beans take advantage of extra space so spacing can be highly variable. We've had good results with planting bush beans 4-12" apart and pole beans 2-6" apart. Some farmers grow beans in double rows, with rows 12" apart. Plant beans May 7-30 when soil temp has reached 60 degrees. If the weather is warm, don't delay, as the late summer rains make harvest difficult if planted late. Adding an inoculant may improve productivity.

### GROWING METHODS

#### MAINTENANCE

Pole beans require strong, tall trellising. 8' is best. We use strong poles 10-20' apart with horizontal wire across the top and bottom. Biodegradable string is then run in a zigzag from top to bottom, one per plant after they germinate. You will need to weed a few times. You may or may not need to water; if you do, be sure to stop as soon as the pods are mature so they can dry down as early as possible.

### HARVEST

Dry beans will be ready from mid-August to early October, depending on a number of factors. Harvest when the pods are dry and crispy. Pick individual pods as they dry or cut the whole plant and hang to dry if the rainy season has taken over. They are much easier to thresh and winnow if the pods are off the stalk, so it is usually worth the extra labor in the field.

### THRESHING

Many small-scale farmers are experimenting with converted wood chipper/shredders. The easiest and most efficient homestead method is to throw bean pods onto a tarp and stomp/dance on them. And lastly, for small batches, nothing beats sitting around with children in the evening cracking open one pod at a time.

### PROCESSING

#### SEED-SAVING & STORAGE

Save seed from the earliest-maturing and most productive plants. What you eat is what you plant. Most references say that beans generally will not cross-pollinate but crossing can occur and it may not be obvious until the following year's crop. Leave beans in paper grocery bags or breathable bins until fully dry before storage. We leave ours out for a month or two, then store in Rubbermaid bins.

### COOKING TIPS

Soak beans for 4-12 hours. Rinse well. Add 3 cups of water for every cup of dry beans. Bring to a boil and simmer until the bean can be smashed between fingers. Do NOT add salt or acid (like tomatoes) until done or they may not soften. Freshly harvested beans soak and cook much faster than the old beans from the supermarket. They often take only 1 hour. To reduce gas from eating beans, add a 2" strip of Kombu seaweed to the cooking water.

### YIELDS & LABOR

We've seen bush bean yields ranging from 12-74 cups (4.5-29 lbs) per 100 row feet, with a common average being 30 cups (12 lbs) per 100 RF. Our pole beans have yielded 32-128 cups (12-52 lbs) per 100 row feet, with 80 cups (32 lbs) being a common yield.

### BBGP RESEARCH

#### VARIETIES

Earliest: Ely (pole), Jacob's Cattle, Ireland Creek Annie, Red Kidney, Rockwell.  
Tastiest: Beka Brown, Montezuma Red Kidney, Ely, Painted Lady, Black Turtle.  
Most Productive: Decker Family, Ely

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Legumes are high in protein and fiber, and complement corn and other grains to make a complete protein. Fresh, home-grown beans are easier to digest, tastier, and more nutritious than those old beans from the supermarket.