



Whether bush or pole, **GREEN BEANS** weather Wyoming

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Growing green beans is not only beneficial to your health but also to the health of your garden.

Many types of beans are available to gardeners and farmers. Beans are extremely diverse and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Edible beans are split into two categories: dry or green beans. The seeds and the seedpod are consumed with green beans whereas the seeds usually are only consumed in dry bean varieties. Though called “green beans,” the pods of these beans can be purple, green, yellow, or red. Bean seeds, once dry, can be red to yellow, or brown in color.

Beans in the Garden

Green beans have varying growth patterns. Most often, the different varieties of beans are split into bush and pole growth pattern categories. The bush style beans rarely grow above 2 to 3 feet high, whereas certain pole bean varieties have a more vine-like growth pattern and will reach heights of 10 to 15 feet. They are often grown on trellises.

Beans can handle cool to hot climates depending on the variety. For Wyoming, select a variety recommended for cooler climates with a short maturity day number. Please refer to *UW Bulletin 1115*, bit.ly/wyogardening, for variety selection and planting recommendations.

Green beans are a legume. *Rhizobium* bacteria, which live in nodules on the legume plant roots, take nitrogen out of the atmosphere and put it into soil. The nitrogen that is fixed into the soil provides a rich nutrient source for other plants. These beans can be used in crop rotation or grown with other crops as a companion crop.

An example of their use as a companion plant is planting pole beans between rows of corn. The corn provides structure for the bean to climb and the beans in return provide much needed nitrogen to the corn plants. Beans can also be used in crop rotation. Crops planted in the same spot as the beans in the previous year will find a nice supply of nitrogen waiting in the soil.

Green and Good For You

While *growing* green beans is good for your soil, *eating* green beans can be good for your health. Green beans are an excellent source of vitamin C and vitamin K, providing over 20 percent of the daily value of these vitamins in each cup! They are also a good source of fiber, folate, manganese, and vitamin A. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends 2-3 cups of legumes per week for health, and green beans are one great way to help reach this recommendation.

Whether growing your own or purchasing beans from a store, try to choose beans that are straight and slender, ideally no thicker than a pencil. The beans should have vibrant coloring and a firm texture that snaps

crisply when broken. Avoid beans that are limp or have rust spots or scars. If the seeds (beans) are visibly bulging in the pods, you will know that the beans are over-mature. For best quality, beans should be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper and used within five days.

Green beans lend themselves well to a variety of preparation methods. The method you choose will depend on the equipment you have, time available for preparation, and – most importantly – your preferences for flavor and texture in the bean dishes you enjoy.

While some enjoy fresh (raw) green beans, most individuals prefer to cook the beans before eating them. They can be blanched or

steamed on the stovetop or in the microwave quite quickly, usually in about five to seven minutes. Green beans are also commonly used in stir-fry dishes or sautéed in a small amount of oil. They can also be cooked on the grill, just use a food-safe grill basket, iron skillet, or aluminum foil wrap. Regardless of your cooking method, avoid over-cooking to preserve color, flavor, texture, and nutrient value.

Home Preservation Methods

There are a variety of preservation methods that can be used at home if you have grown more green beans than you can eat. Dehydrating and freezing are the two simplest methods – just be sure to blanch (boil and cool) the green beans for three minutes before dehydrating or freezing them. This will help preserve color, texture, and nutrition.

Beans can also be fermented or pickled with vinegar. This will greatly extend refrigerator storage life, or, if using a research-tested recipe, you can water-bath process your product for shelf storage.

Beans can be canned without additional acid. You will need to use a pressure canner (and a tested recipe!) as with any other low-acid food (to avoid serious health issues such as botulism). Be sure to check the USDA guidelines on the amount of pressure (due to various altitudes) to use, as well as the length of time.

For research-tested recipes and recommendations, contact your local extension office or visit www.bit.ly/eatwypreserve.



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