

1. Plant seeds middle to end of March in peat free compost in a greenhouse, cold frame or cloche.. or inside, kitchen window sill etc. They will germinate in a 7-10 days @18-20C. Good idea to get the kids/ grandkids involved!
2. During this time choose a sunny but protected site outside preferably 4 square metres for 10 plants which will easily feed a family of 4 for 3-4 months
3. Dig the plot to 30cm depth and break up into friable soil, clear any weeds particularly ivy, ground elder, couch grass + stones and twigs/debris and dig in in 200 litres of home made compost, leaf mould or peat free compost from garden centre bags
4. Decide what your support construction will look like...remember the beans will grow to 3m tall. Wigwams are popular for 2 to 3 plants each
5. Canes with or without string are popular but will need to be tied securely with garden twine for security against winds in September / October
6. Plant out the seedlings when 30 cm tall and there is no chance of frost.
7. Loosely tie to the sticks or string. Carefully tamp down the soil/compost mix the roots, at this stage they are very fragile until the stem gets woody.
8. Water well at night or early morning from a water butt if possible, as this is not chlorinated and will be 5C warmer than tap water too. On hot summer spells you will need to water at least 3 times a week or even daily
9. Be very wary of slugs and snails, snails in particular love them and appear after dusk. Bird netting around the cane base will trap them
10. After 2-3 weeks in May, flowers will appear which the bees and other insects will pollinate. Each successfully pollinated flower will become a bean! Generally July is when the harvest will begin...through till October or first Autumn frost. Normally 12-16 weeks of harvest as long as you keep picking and watering
11. Pick when 12-15cm long, the more you pick the more new flowers and beans will appear
12. Feed with a high potassium solution every 2 weeks once the pods are growing vigorously...if you grow Comfrey then this is perfect fertiliser when rooted down and made into a tea
13. There are bean slicers readily available or you can cut into diamonds and cook for 6 mins in salted water,...cover with butter and black pepper..delish!
14. If the beans get to 20-30cm you can argue you've got a higher yield, but then they can get stringy and need edge trimming in the prep.
15. Ensure you have sufficient bracing ready for the winds as when in full leaf, the vines form a big sail!



Any problems ring Richard on 07771 694556