



GREEN BEAN TALKING POINTS

2. Green Bean History

- Green beans and other beans, such as kidney beans, navy beans and black beans are all known scientifically as *Phaseolus vulgaris*. These are all referred to as "common beans." A majority of common beans derived from a **common bean ancestor that originated in Peru**. From there, they spread throughout South and Central America by migrating Indian tribes.
- The green bean was **introduced to the Mediterranean upon the return of Columbus** from his second voyage to the New World in 1493. In Columbus's diary from November 4, 1492 he describes lands in Cuba planted with faxones and fabas "different than ours." Later he encountered fexoes and habas that were different than the ones he knew from Spain. Faxones was probably the cowpea and fabas and habas was the fava bean. The beans Columbus found were undoubtedly what is now designated *Phaseolus vulgaris*.
- The bean spread into the eastern Mediterranean and by the seventeenth century was cultivated everywhere in Italy, Greece, and Turkey.
- In a 1988 study of the phaseolin structure of the common bean researchers traced the beans now grown in the western Mediterranean as ones originating in the Andes.



3. & 4. How do Green Beans grow? (What plant part do we eat?)

- **There are bush green beans and pole green beans. Bush Green Beans**
 - Bush green beans, such as "Tender Pod" and "Blue Lake," are the staple of many home gardens, as they require little space to grow and produce an abundant crop of fresh beans in 50 to 55 days depending on the variety. Under ideal growing conditions, pods fill out within a week of blooming, producing the first crop of fresh beans. Harvesting often encourages prolonged production.
 - Pole beans grow to heights of 10 feet or more and require staking. Many prefer the increased size and rich flavor of pole beans to that of bush beans. However, they require more time to reach maturity. Pole beans, such as "Kentucky Wonder" and "Kentucky Blue," produce tender green pods that mature in 65 to 75 days.
- For both types, flowers form between around 15 and 45 days of growth. **After pollination, the bean flowers swell into the bean pods we eat.**
- All beans, except cool-weather fava beans, are sensitive to frost and cold soil temperatures. Plant when the soil is warm and all danger of frost is past. Rotate the location of bean crops from year to year to discourage disease.
- Select a site with full sun and well-drained soil. Prepare the garden bed by using a garden fork or tiller to loosen the soil to a depth of 12 to 15 inches, then mix in a 2- to 4-inch layer of compost.

- Plant bush beans for an early harvest. Plant seeds 2 to 4 inches apart and 1 to 1-1/2 inches deep. Plant extra seeds, then thin plants to the spacing recommended on the seed packet. Pole (climbing) beans are slower to mature, but they have a longer harvest period. Set up trellises or tepees before planting. Plant seeds 2 to 4 inches apart and 1 to 1-1/2 inches deep.

5. What season do we pick green beans?

- **In South Dakota** gardeners/small farmers can harvest beans during most of the growing season, **spring through fall**. From late May through the fall, depending on the first frost.
- In warmer climates, some types of green beans may be planted and/or harvested year-round.

6. Why should we eat green beans?

How Much Do I Need?

- The amount of fruits and vegetables you need depends on your age, gender, and physical activity level. all forms of fruits and vegetables count toward your daily needs – fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% juice!
- Almost everyone needs between 5-9 servings of veggies and fruits a day.
- One serving, a ½ cup of green beans, is about one cupped handful.
- **A ½ cup of green beans is a good source of vitamin A, folate, fiber and manganese.**
- Green beans are low in Sodium, and very low in Saturated Fat and Cholesterol. They are also a good source of Protein, Thiamin, Riboflavin, Niacin, Vitamin B6, Calcium, Iron, Magnesium, Phosphorus, Potassium and Copper, and a very good source of Dietary Fiber, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, Folate and Manganese.
- Snap beans (sometimes called string beans, although plant breeders have developed varieties without the tough string) are eaten whole, pod and all, when seeds inside are undeveloped or very small. Shell beans are eaten fresh after they are removed from the pod. Dried beans are harvested when the pods dry out, and they require extended cooking.
- The strong carotenoid and flavonoid content of green beans also appears to give this vegetable some potentially unique anti-inflammatory benefits. For example, some very preliminary research in laboratory animals shows decreased activity of certain inflammation-related enzymes—lipoxygenases (LOX) and cyclooxygenases (COX)—following intake of bean extracts.

7. How do you pick good green beans?

- Choose green beans that are crisp, and solid green (without any spots.)
- Green beans may be stored for up to 7 days in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.
- Choose straight green beans (not crooked ones) because they are easier to cook and prepare.

Sources:

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