

# Build a better veg planner

## Background

Most veg growing calendars for the UK are quite generic and give little indication as to location. This can be quite confusing for new gardeners, as the time to plant out a tender crop will be quite different in London compared to an exposed site in Northumberland. We would like to collect data from gardeners around the UK, using the climbing French Bean as a model crop, so that we can get a better idea of what works in each region. Many people may be recording this information anyway, but it would be useful to have it all gathered in the same way in one place.

The last few years have also seen departures from the weather we are accustomed to. Not only has there been a trend for milder wetter winters, but there has been considerable variability with an increased occurrence of 'extreme' events. We would like to collect repeated records over time so that we can observe any longitudinal trends and how they affect our growing season.



## Aims of this experiment

- Collect a standardised UK regional dataset to provide a better indication of regional variability for key dates in the growing calendar
- Provide longitudinal records to observe long term trends or changes in the gardening calendar

## What we need from you:

A growing space of at least 1.2m x 1.2 m plot where you grow your climbing French Beans

Growing care: sowing, planting out and watering the plots

Recording online of key dates during the growing season

## Instructions

If you are taking part in this experiment, we assume that you have probably grown French Beans before, so please stick to the method that you normally use.

Our method of growing French beans is:

### Sowing

- Sow each bean 2 cm deep into 8cm (3 in) pots of peat free compost and keep in a warm place until they germinate

### Plant care

- Keep the plants in a warm light place to allow them to develop
- Once they have developed a couple of true leaves (the leaves after the first couple of seed leaves), put the pots outside during the day to allow the plants to harden off

### Bed preparation

- Weed the bed and add compost so that it has moderate levels of fertility
- Construct a wigwam of canes or sticks, around 2 m high, to allow the plants to climb

### Planting out

- After the danger of last frost has passed, plant out your plants around your wigwam and water them in well
- Water as necessary and look for slugs at night. Replace any plants that get badly damaged
- Encourage them to climb up the wigwam
- Weed the plots as needed
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Alternatively, you may sow the beans seeds directly into the plot, once the soil has warmed up.

### Records

- Variety grown
- Date of sowing
- Date of planting out
- Date of first flowering
- Date of first pod set
- Date of first harvest
- Date of last harvest

## Recording data

Please enter the data online using this link:

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/what-we-do/citizen-science-and-research/members-experiments/build-a-better-veg-planner>

Electronic versions of these instructions are also available at the link above.

**You can now store results on the form as you go** – press ‘Save’ and it will email you a link, which you can then use to resume entering results. Please keep this email in a safe place so that you can retrieve the results. If you do lose it, then you will need to email us ([experiments@gardenorganic.org.uk](mailto:experiments@gardenorganic.org.uk)) and ask me for a new link. Alternatively you can save the link as a bookmark in your browser so that you can readily access it.

We welcome good quality photos. The best ones may be published in our magazine and on social media. Please send photos to [experiments@gardenorganic.org.uk](mailto:experiments@gardenorganic.org.uk). Unfortunately, we are unable to use hard copy prints.

# Recording sheet

## Your site

**What is the first half of your postcode?**

### Soil type

- ☐ Very sandy
 ☐ Quite sandy
 ☐ Silty
 ☐ Mix of sand, silt and clay (loam)
- ☐ Some clay
 ☐ Heavy clay
 ☐ Peaty
 ☐ Chalky

### Shading of plot

- ☐ Shaded
 ☐ Semi shaded
 ☐ Sunny

### Exposure of site

- ☐ Sheltered
 ☐ Semi sheltered
 ☐ Exposed

## Your plants

**Which variety of French bean did you choose to grow?**

**What date did you sow the French beans?**

**Did you sow them directly or in pots?**

- ☐ Directly
 ☐ In pots

**Where did you sow them?**

- ☐ Outside, no protection
 ☐ Outside with protection
 ☐ In the house / windowsill

**What date did they first emerge?**

**What date did you plant them out?**

**Where did you grow them?**

- ☐ Outside
 ☐ Glasshouse
 ☐ Polytunnel

**Flowering**

Please estimate the date when the plants started flowering

**Pod set**

Please estimate the date when the plants started setting pods

**Harvesting**

Please record the date of your first harvest

Please record the date of your last harvest

How would you describe the yield of your beans this year?				
Disaster, very little or almost no crop	Poor crop, less than usual	Average crop, similar to usual	Good crop, better than usual	Excellent crop, much better than usual
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Did you experience any pests or diseases on your French beans?

Any other comments?

Please answer the following questions about this experiment

Please tick which of the boxes you think applied to your experience of taking part in the members' experiments this year.					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I enjoyed taking part in this experiment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt I learnt something new	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt I was contributing to something useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am likely to take part again	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other comments					
Any suggestions for future Members experiments					