

HOW TO... GROW CLIMBING RUNNER BEANS IN POTS



Runner beans are a productive and beautiful container crop. They'll make a fabulous statement outside your front door!

You can get runners with either orange or white flowers. Mixing the two can look really pretty.

Here are some tips for growing them in containers.

1. Sow outside from early June (once threat of frost is over). You can grow a surprising number of beans in one pot – eight in a 40cm square pot will be fine.
2. Runners grow best with lots of water. Check by feeling the compost an inch or two down - it should be damp like a wrung out sponge. They'll probably need watering every day, particularly when warm or windy. Large pots hold more water and so are a good choice.
3. Slugs love runner bean seedlings – watch out! You can protect them with small home-made cloches – cut empty drink bottles in half and put one over each seedling.
4. Runners need a good tall support to climb up – like a wigwam. Use canes or tall branches if you can find them.
5. When the runners reach the top of the canes, pinch out the tops (this means cutting the very tip off). This will encourage the plant to send out more shoots – and beans – below.
6. Pick, pick, pick. It's very important to keep picking running beans – as this encourages the plant to grow more. Pick the beans small for a delicious, tender treat (big beans look cool but can be rather tough to eat).
7. To boost your crop, feed with liquid tomato food once every two or three weeks after the plant starts flowering.



Climbing French beans can be grown in exactly the same way.

You can also get dwarf runner beans (and dwarf French beans) – they are grown in the same way, the only difference is they are shorter and so don't need such long canes to support them.

