

# Full of Beans

## Little green fingers

Introducing children to gardening is a great way for them to understand where the food on their plate comes from. As an outdoor activity that can take place in your own garden, they can safely check on the growth of their plants daily and you can extend the activity to include drawing, counting and even a word quiz if you wish.

Gardening can become an interesting and rewarding hobby with most adults saying they began their love affair with the soil as children. So print off the following guide to growing runner beans and you could find you have your very own Jack and the Beanstalk.

### Grow your own runner beans

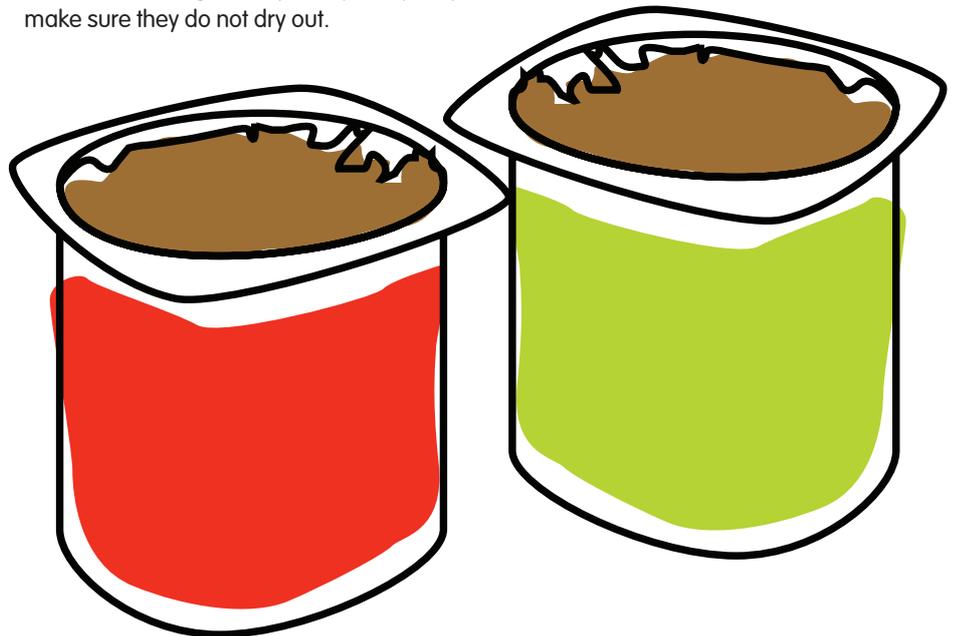
#### What you will need:

- 10 used yoghurt pots
- Compost
- Bean seeds
- Canes
- Strings

Pop along to your local garden centre for the above (except the yoghurt pots!)

#### Step-by-step gardening guide:

- 1 Save a few yoghurt pots to one side and make several small holes in the bottom to allow for drainage.
- 2 Ask the children to count out two bean seeds for each yoghurt pot. Fill each pot with compost, ask the children to make a hole with their finger and place a bean seed in each hole before covering with compost. Sit on a tray/plate, sprinkle with water and place in a cool, dry area, out of direct sunlight. Keep an eye on your pots and make sure they do not dry out.



- 3 After a few days there will be signs of growth and the child will be able see the first green shoots coming through as germination takes place. Once each plant is approximately 5cms in height it is ready for the ground.

**Tip:** Suggest to the children that they begin a bean diary, noting the day the bean was first planted, how long it takes for the plant to germinate and thereafter be planted in the soil and grow. They can include pictures and measurements to tell the story.

There are a number of runner bean varieties, some grow white and some grow red flowers. Why not pick different seed packets and grow a few from each to see which runner beans the children like best. Ask them if they taste differently? See which plant grows quicker than the other? The children can even compete against each other or with their friends.



- 4 Gather the canes and string and make a wig-wam. Dig two holes either side of each cane and ask the children to put a plant in each hole, then water. Make sure you do this when there is no frost on the ground.
- 5 Nature will then take its course. The beans will curl around each cane but may need a little help by a little hand. Water during dry spells.
- 6 When the flowers die off small green pods appear. These are the runner beans. Check your pack to see the length they will grow before they can be picked.

**Tip:**

If you leave your runner beans too long they will become tough and stringy so make sure you pick them when they are bright green. Beans that are left to grow for too long will become paler and plump. Ideally you should check your runner beans every day and that means you could have fresh beans for every evening meal!

