

Maker Mondays

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Welcome to Week Ten of Maker Mondays from Historic Deerfield. Check your social media feed or look for an email from us every Monday for a fun activity that you can do at home, inspired by history and using common household items.

Beans! A Seasonal Garden Activity and Recipe



The Historic Deerfield History Workshop Garden in August

This Monday we have adapted an activity from a garden program that we have offered at Historic Deerfield during previous Junes. At the History Workshop, we have a teaching garden. Every year we feature plants like flax, broomcorn, herbs and vegetables that support our interpretive programs. This week's Maker Monday focuses on the humble--yet beautiful--scarlet runner bean. It is a pole bean that climbs up a trellis and has beautiful red flowers. It looks great in the garden, and the bright flowers are very attractive to hummingbirds, butterflies and honey bees. If you let the pods dry, you can shell the beans and use them in meals. The scarlet runner bean has had an interesting global journey. First, though: a little background about beans.

All About Beans

Beans and bean products are diet staples worldwide. Throughout history, the cultivation and preservation of beans (also referred to as legumes) around the world has often meant the difference between life and death. Beans are among the simplest plants to grow and are an excellent source of protein. In addition, legumes have historically acted as a critical source of food insurance against times of famine, as they are virtually indestructible if properly dried and stored.

Unlike other staple foods which vary from place to place around the world, nearly every culture has depended on the ubiquitous bean for sustenance. Archaeological research has led scientists to believe that beans first began to be cultivated somewhere between 7000 and 3000 B.C E. Through their culinary history, beans have been used in a wide variety of ways. Some are dried and boiled, others are eaten fresh and immature, some are ground into flour, and some are even processed into food only vaguely reminiscent of beans such as soy milk, tofu, or vegetable oil.

Scarlet Runner Beans

Scarlet runner beans are native to the mountains of Mexico and Central America. After the Spanish invasion and colonization of Mesoamerica, the beans were introduced to Europe. European colonists subsequently brought them to North America in the early 1700s.



Planting Beans

Now that you have read about beans, we hope you are anxious to plant some. If you don't have a garden space for beans, you can plant the seeds in a large flower pot or even in a big bucket.

Scarlet runners prefer full sun, although they tolerate part shade. Plant the seeds in a row, placing the seeds 2 to 3 inches deep and spacing them 4 to 8 inches apart. Germination takes 7 - 14 days. As we mentioned, scarlet runner beans are "pole beans" which means they need the support of a pole or trellis to climb. As they grow, they "run" up the support getting taller and taller and producing flowers that, when pollinated, become the bean pods.

Making the Trellis:

There are many ways to support the climbing vines of the scarlet runner beans. They will climb a single pole or a wooden or wire fence. We have had success with a simple trellis made from sticks we gathered outdoors. The model we will show you is just a starter trellis and will need to be replaced by a larger one as your bean plants grow.



Pictured below are the tools you will need:



Directions for Making a Trellis:

We used 8 sticks for our trellis. The longest stick is 12 inches long and the shortest stick is 4 inches long. You can see how we arranged the sticks in a fan shape and then that nailed to three supportive cross sticks. We used very small nails, called wire brads, to hold the sticks together. If you have a staple gun you could staple them or, lacking nails or staples, you can tie them **tightly** together. Just keep in mind that the growing, climbing bean plant will exert pressure on the trellis, so be sure the sticks are tightly held in place. The scarlet runner bean will grow quickly so you will need to replace the small trellis with a larger one or a tall straight pole. In approximately 65 days the bean pods will be mature enough to eat. Here are some ways we have enjoyed our beans:

Eating your beans:

To eat as a green bean in the pod: pick the whole pod, snap off the ends, cut into pieces and cook as you would green beans.

To eat as a dry shelled bean: soak in water to soften, and cook according to the recipe you are following.



Dried scarlet runner beans can be dark brown with purple streaks or light brown with black streaks. They are beautiful and shiny.

Baked Beans



A humble mid-19th century American bean pot from our collection. It is scorched with soot, old grease, and smoke from its use as a cooking vessel. HD 2014.4.22

Baked beans have been a staple in the United States for generations, and the redware bean pot was a common item. Lead-glazed inside and out, or only on the interior, with one, two or no handles, these squat round forms ranged in capacity from a pint to a gallon and came with matching lids. They were used so often that the lids were the first things to break or get lost. In some records, such as potters' price lists, they were called "bean bakers."

As we begin the season of cookouts and barbeques, many families serve baked beans with their hot dogs and hamburgers. Older folks may fondly remember having "franks and beans" for a quick Saturday night supper. Cowboy movies show the chuck wagon cook heating up beans in a can for a

satisfying hot meal. And in New England, many people consider baked beans to be a quintessential Boston dish -- Boston Baked Beans. Today we can buy cans of baked beans in the supermarket. Have you ever made your own baked beans from scratch? Just like planting, growing and drying the scarlet runner beans, baked beans take time.

Below, we offer you two recipes for baked beans from nineteenth-century cookbooks. Both recipes call for dried beans. You could try any of these recipes with dried beans like Scarlet Runner Beans, red beans, black beans, or heirloom varieties like Jacob's Cattle Beans or Cranberry Beans. The first recipe, "Pork and Beans," is from *Directions for Cookery, in its Various Branches* by Eliza Leslie, first published in 1837. The recipe was copied from a digitized edition of the book from Project Gutenberg, a library of over 60,000 free e-books (<https://www.gutenberg.org/>).

PORK AND BEANS.

Allow two pounds of pickled pork to two quarts of dried beans. If the meat is very salt put it in soak over night. Put the beans into a pot with cold water, and let them hang all night over the embers of the fire, or set them in the chimney corner, that they may warm as well as soak. Early in the morning rinse them through a cullender. Score the rind of the pork, (which should not be a very fat piece,) and put the meat into a clean pot with the beans, which must be seasoned with pepper. Let them boil slowly together for about two hours, and carefully remove all the scum and fat that rises to the top. Then take them out; lay the pork in a tin pan, and cover the meat with the beans, adding a very little water. Put it into an oven, and bake it four hours.

This is a homely dish, but is by many persons much liked. It is customary to bring it to table in the pan in which it is baked.

The second recipe is from *The Original Fannie Farmer 1896 Cook Book*, a facsimile of the 1896 edition published in 2002 by Allied Publishing Group, pages 211-212.

Boston Baked Beans

Pick over one quart pea beans, cover with cold water, and soak overnight. In morning, drain, cover with fresh water, heat slowly (keeping water below boiling point), and cook until skins will burst, --- which is best determined by taking a few beans on the tip of a spoon and blowing on them, when skins will burst if sufficiently cooked. Beans thus tested must, of course, be thrown away. Drain beans, throwing bean-water out of doors, not in sink. Scald rind of one-half pound of fat salt pork, scrape, remove one-fourth inch slice and put in bottom of bean-pot. Cut through rind of remaining pork every one-half inch, making cuts one inch deep. Put beans in pot and bury pork in beans, leaving rind exposed. Mix one tablespoon salt, one tablespoon molasses, and three tablespoons sugar; add one cup boiling water, and pour over beans; then add enough boiling water to cover beans. Cover bean-pot, put in oven, and bake slowly six or eight hours, uncovering the last hour of cooking, that rind may become brown and crisp. Add water as needed. Many feel that by adding with seasonings one-half tablespoon mustard, the beans are more easily digested. If pork mixed with lean is preferred, use less salt.

The fine reputation which Boston Baked Beans have gained, has been attributed to the earthen bean-pot with small top and building sides in which they are supposed to be cooked. Equally good beans have often been eaten where a five-pound lard pail was substituted for the broken bean pot.

Yellow-eyed beans are very good when baked.



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This American bean pot was made between 1860-1910. It has a lid not shown in this picture.

We hope that you have enjoyed this week's Maker Mondays activity. This activity -- planting and growing scarlet runner beans and making baked beans -- can be something that you do all summer. Plant and care for your beans and then, come autumn, after the beans have dried, make a pot of hearty and flavorful baked beans.