

Although most varieties of pole beans will quickly grow up even the simplest of supports, you'll have better luck if you give them a support designed just for them. Take three six-foot-long 1 x 1 laths and assemble them into a triangular tepee, tying the tops together and sinking the other ends into the soil. Be sure all three poles are firmly in the ground before planting. Then plant six to eight seeds of climbing beans at the base of each lath. When the plants are up and growing, thin them so there are about three healthy seedlings per pole. They won't need to be tied; they'll twine unassisted.

To make the tepee even more functional, use the area underneath the poles to plant cool-weather crops, such as lettuce, spinach, or beets. As the beans grow up the poles, they'll shade the cool-season crops from the direct rays of the sun. Grown in this manner, harvests of lettuce and the other cool-weather crops can often be extended throughout the summer months.

If you don't want a large bean crop, you can get by with only one pole. Simply sink the pole about one foot into the ground, and wrap a loose cone of chicken wire around it. Secure the chicken wire to the pole so it will not come undone; plant seeds at four-inch intervals around the base of the support. In a few weeks, you'll be enjoying plenty of freshly picked green beans.