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Greenhouse Vegetables by [Gabriel Ash](#)

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The greenhouse extends the season at both ends allowing you to grow a much bigger variety of plants and if you use it to propagate seeds and cuttings you will quickly recoup the cost you might have paid for mature plants, not to mention the fortune youâ€™ll save growing your own. But itâ€™s more than that. How can you quantify the pleasure that a greenhouse brings, or decide what value to place on the part it plays in your garden?

One of the great things about owning a greenhouse is growing crops earlier than you can outside. Thereâ€™s something really satisfying about picking a fresh crop of herbs, fruit and vegetable before they are ready in the garden. Itâ€™s even more satisfying when you see the equivalent crop in the supermarket at extortionate prices and usually imported from far distant shores. How anyone can consider their carbon footprint when they buy beans from Kenya, potatoes from Egypt and other easy to grow crops that are flown thousands of miles. It just doesnâ€™t make sense.

You can use the greenhouse to start off early potatoes in planters and grow bags and indeed grow a late crop for Christmas too. In early spring the value of the greenhouse for salad leaves and herbs almost justifies its existence before you get started, but once you factor in the extra benefits of stronger, healthier plants ready to plant out, early harvests of carrots, broad beans, new potatoes and more you start to get the picture.

When it comes to beans, the runner beans especially need to be accessed by pollinators, unless you choose one of the self-fertile varieties such as Moonlight or the new Firestorm from Marshalls (www.marshalls-seeds.co.uk). This is a great compromise if you want to exclude most flying insects from the greenhouse but still benefit from a crop of beans. Runner beans can clamber through the greenhouse framework and create internal shading for other greenhouse plants. But even if you allow the pollinators in for crops such as tomatoes, aubergines and chillies, the nectar searching insects can still benefit from the runner bean flowers and anything else flowering in your greenhouse.

You can get an earlier bean crop in the greenhouse by growing these plants in deep planters and if you sow a new planter every 2-4 weeks you can get a late crop too with pods forming well into October and November if the weather allows. The great thing about a late crop is that the beans are usually a bit sweeter too.

Make sure you provide an escape route for pollinators, as most need to return to their nest or hive before dusk.

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