

# CREATE A BEAN TEEPEE PLAYHOUSE

## AGES

2-10 years old

## CONTRIBUTED BY

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**B**ean teepee playhouses are inexpensive, creative play elements that enhance school grounds for young children by providing a setting for their imaginative games that is cozy and inviting, and easy for adults to supervise. These simple structures can be built in a very short amount of time, are inexpensive and are straight forward to assemble. They can be planted directly in the ground or use large, sturdy pots for support.

## MATERIALS

- 5-10 sturdy bamboo poles at least 8' in length (3 m) and 1"-2" in diameter (3-5 cm). If planting in containers on a paved school ground, also purchase one large, sturdy pot or planter for each bamboo pole and fill them completely with rich potting soil.
- Edible bean plants that are vigorous climbers such as: scarlet runner beans (with lovely red flowers and large, tasty bean pods), pole beans (generally with white flowers and smaller pods), or other climbing plants. Purchase enough seeds or seedlings to have 4-6 plants per bamboo pole.
- Additional plants to enliven the base of the teepee or fill the surface of the pots, such as: nasturtiums, sorrel, lettuce, or other leafy and flowering edible plants.
- Twine to tie the bamboo poles together at the top and to attach the vines to the poles as they grow.

## DIRECTIONS

- Find a suitable location for the bean teepee playhouse in an area that receives some sun to help plants grow. Check to make sure this location is also away from ball games, so children who are engrossed in creative play will not be disturbed by flying balls.
- Mark a rough circle on the soil or grass—or arrange large pots to form a circle—big enough for 2-4 children to sit comfortably inside.
- Gather bamboo poles together. Wrap a piece of sturdy twine around the top of all of the bamboo poles, roughly 1'-2' (0.3-0.6 meters) from one end, to hold them together loosely.
- With several people working together, spread the poles out to form a cone shape, with the twine-wrapped end at the top. Place the bottom ends of the poles at least 2' (0.6 meters) into the soil or to the bottom of the large pots that will serve as their base. Pack the soil down around the poles quite firmly and check to make sure that the structure is secure.
- Plant bean seeds or seedlings around the base of the poles. Add additional flowering, edible plants to fill the tops of the pots or enliven the area at the base of the poles.
- Water regularly. As the plants grow, tie the vines to the bamboo poles to give them support until they are well established.

