

[< back](#)

Follow up to the previous pole bean tee pee construction tip  
RE: checking wood toxicity

Hello to all,

Thank you for the replies to the previous lesson. A question has come up about what type of wooden poles to use to build the pole bean climber. Untreated pine wood is cost effective and safe to use for garden stakes or for making raised bed gardens. However it will start to rot in about 3-4 years. If you want to use outdoor treated wood it's going to be more expensive than untreated pine but you can get 10-15 years out of this wood that has been used for ground contact. However we need to consider any toxic effect this may have on the vegetables grown.

If choosing treated wood keep in mind that wood that was pressure treated before 2004 contained a good amount of arsenic to keep it from rotting. It worked but the leaching into the soil of the chemical was a health hazard for home gardeners. So if you are making stakes or raised beds from old lumber that's been laying around and you don't know for how long, it is best to not use it. After 2004 arsenic treated lumber was banned and a much less worrisome copper substitute has been used. There have been numerous tests done from various companies to check the safety. Leaching with the new method is considerably less, and the minuscule amount of copper from this type of wood and the possible contact with vegetables has shown to pose no risk to human health.

When you go to a garden shop or lumber yard checking the type of treated wood is easy. A piece of lumber that is outdoor treated will have a little white plastic tag stapled on the end of it. If the treated method is listed as ACQ; CA; or MCQ – its safe. If it's an old supply that has CCA on it do not use it for your garden – its arsenic coated.

If you want to go the way of natural woods that are garden safe and mostly rot resistant the best woods are – Western Red Cedar; California Redwood; Black Locust; White Oak; Juniper. But they will cost more than untreated Pine.

That's about it. Happy gardening! --- KL