Installing NetBeans C++ From Scratch
NetBeans was originally just an open-source Java compiler (albeit the best one), but now it has broadened its frontiers to other languages like C++.
Don't be scared if the interface is overwhelming at first, it will all make sense in time.
Post to the forum or Google Group (tpprogrammers.net, click on Forum)!

Note: multiple times during this process you will be asked to run or download a .exe file (for Windows). Don't worry about the warning, these sites all are credible.

Downloading NetBeans
The first thing you must do is download NetBeans IDE (Integrated Development Environment, basically software that helps you program). The instructions are the same for all platforms (Mac, Windows, Linux, Solaris).

1. Go to http://www.netbeans.org/
2. Click on the giant button on the homepage that says Download NetBeans IDE
3. Unless you are certain that you have a recent version of Java installed, don't click on the next big button that says Download NetBeans IDE, but rather scroll down to Download NetBeans IDE with JDK and click on the top link under the heading.
4. If you clicked on the big button in step 3, the download will begin and follow the instructions on screen (save and run the setup.exe or whatever file if nothing to the contrary is said). Otherwise, click the download link at the right and continue to step 5.
5. Click the accept button for the license agreement. Then click on the link for your operating system below. Save and run the resulting file.
6. This will update Java and NetBeans to the latest version on your computer.

Downloading the C++ Addon Pack
NetBeans does not natively support C++ (it is mainly a Java Compiler), but you can download C++ addons for it at http://www.netbeans.org/.

The online installation instructions for the addon packs are a bit confusing, so this hopefully clarifies them.

1. Go to http://www.netbeans.org/
2. Click on the C/C++ Pack link on the Home or Products page
3. You can just click the big Download NetBeans C/C++ Pack button if you already have the G++ (Gnu open-source C++) components:
    gcc-core: C compiler, gcc-g++: C++ compiler, gdb: The GNU Debugger, and make: the GNU version of the 'make' utility
    If you have no idea what these are or if you don't have them, continue reading my instructions.
4. For THEIR instructions, click on Documentation on the right hand bar, and click on the first link under Release Documentation and look under your operating system for Installing the Software and Installing and Setting Up the Compilers and Tools.

5. Those are a bit confusing, so continue if you those confuse you (only Windows instructions listed below, users of other OS's will have to make do with their instructions).

NetBeans C/C++ makes use of the major open-source C++ compiler G++ (stands for GNU C++). Before your C++ pack will work, you must download the proper G++ components. Below is a slightly edited version of their instructions to make it more clear.

Windows Instructions (slightly edited)
http://www.netbeans.org/community/releases/55/1/cnd-install.html#install_windows
To install the GNU compilers, `make`, and `gdb` debugger from cygwin.com:
1. Download the Cygwin `setup.exe` program by clicking the Install or Update Now! icon in the middle of the page.

2. Run the `setup.exe` program. Accept the defaults until you reach the Select Your Internet Connection page. Select the option on this page that is best for you. Click Next.

3. On the Choose Download Site page, choose a download site you think might be relatively close to you. Click Next. **Choose first or second one**

4. On the Select Packages page you select the packages to download. Click the + next to Devel to expand the development tools category. You may want to resize the window so you can see more of it at one time.

5. Select each package you want to download by clicking the Skip label next to it. At a minimum, select gcc-core: *C compiler, gcc-g++: C++ compiler, gdb: The GNU Debugger, and make: the GNU version of the 'make' utility*. **Just download the vital stuff unless you know what you are doing**

6. Now add the Compiler directory to your path **(tells NetBeans where to find G++)**:
   a. Open the Control Panel (Start > Settings > Control Panel **> Performance and Maintenance**) and click the System program.

   b. Select the Advanced tab and click Environment Variables **(don't freak out at this point)**.

   c. In the System Variables panel of the Environment Variables dialog, select the `Path` variable and click Edit.

   d. Add the path to the *cygwin-directory*\bin **(where *cygwin-directory* is wherever on your computer you downloaded your files, default is:** `C:\cygwin`**)** to the `Path` variable, and click OK. **Just add a semicolon to the end of the contents of the Path variable and add your directory**

name. Try not to delete or modify any other part of the Path variable. Directory names must be separated with a semicolon.

e. Click OK in the Environment Variables dialog and the System Properties dialog.

f. **All done with setting up G++! Now go back to the earlier section and download the NetBeans C/C++ Pack.**

g. **After installing that, you can make a sample C++ project by going to New > Project > Samples > HelloApp and following instructions. Make it your Main Project and compile and run it to see what it does. Go to http://www.cplusplus.com/doc/tutorial/ for a C++ tutorial.**

h. **Yay!**