

# How to Grow Eggplant



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Eggplant is very tender perennial grown as an annual. Eggplant requires 100 to 140 warm days with temperatures consistently between 70° and 90°F to reach harvest. Eggplant is best started indoors and later transplanted into the garden; sow eggplant indoors 6 to 8 weeks before setting plants into the garden. Transplant seedlings into the garden no sooner than 2 to 3 weeks after the last frost in spring.



## Description:

Eggplant is a small- to medium-sized bush vegetable that produces smooth, glossy skinned fruit that can vary in length from 5 to 12 inches long. Eggplants have large, fuzzy, grayish-green leaves and produce star-shaped lavender flowers with yellow centers. The edible fruit can be long and slender or round or egg-shaped fruit. Fruit is creamy-white, yellow, brown, purple, or sometimes almost black. Eggplants can grow 2 to 6 feet tall, depending on the variety.

## Yield:

Plant 1 to 2 eggplants per household member.

## Site:

Grow eggplant in full sun. Eggplant is not particular about the soil it grows in but will grow best in well-drained soil rich in organic matter. Eggplant prefers a soil pH of 5.5 to 6.8. Add aged compost to planting beds before planting. Warm the soil in advance of planting with a black plastic cover.



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## Planting Time:

Eggplant is sensitive to cold. It grows best where day temperatures are between 80° and 90°F and night temperatures between 70° and 80°F. Eggplant is best started indoors 6 to 8 weeks before transplanting into the garden. Set transplants in the garden no sooner than 2 to 3 weeks after the average date of last frost in spring, or when daytime temperatures consistently reach 70°F. Eggplants planted too early will not develop. Eggplant requires up to 150 frost-free days to reach harvest.



## Planting and Spacing:

Sow eggplant seed  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch deep spaced 4 to 5 inches apart. Thin plants to 6 inches apart if the weather does not allow transplanting before plants grow 5 to 6 inches tall. Set eggplants into the garden 18 to 24 inches apart. Space rows 24 to 36 inches apart.



## Water and Feeding:

Eggplants require evenly moist soil to ensure the best and fastest growth. Do not over water or allow the soil to dry out. Once the soil has warmed, mulch around eggplants to retain soil moisture and an even growing temperature. Eggplants are heavy feeders prepare planting beds with aged compost and side dress eggplants with compost tea every 2 or 3 weeks during until the fruit has set.





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## Care:

Protect eggplants from unexpected late frost; provide protection at night until all danger of frost is past. In hot summer climates, the soil temperature may become too warm for the roots; mulch plants about 4 weeks after setting them in the garden. Where temperatures grow hot in the summer to 100°F or greater, protect eggplants with shade covering. Tall varieties and those with heavy fruit may need to be staked.



## Container Growing:

Eggplant is easily grown in containers. Plants will grow in pots at least 12 inches across and as deep. Choose a smaller growing variety. Container grown eggplants are easily moved out of cold weather; so you can extend the season in spring and autumn by moving plants indoors when frost threatens.





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## Harvest:

Eggplants are ready for harvest when the fruit is glossy, firm, and full colored and not streaked with brown. Time from planting to harvest is 100 to 150 days from seed, 70 to 85 days from transplants. Harvest eggplant young before the flesh becomes pithy. The eggplant fruit grows on a sturdy stem; cut the fruit from the stem with a sharp knife.



## Storing and Preserving:

Whole eggplant will keep in a well-ventilated place for up to 1 week at 50°F; it is best not to refrigerate eggplant. Eggplant can be frozen or dried.

**Common name.** Eggplant, aubergine, guinea squash

**Botanical name.** *Solanum melongena*

**Origin.** East Indies, India

