

## How to Grow Eggplants

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### General

Beautiful big plants for a decorative container in the sunshine, eggplants are as diverse as the cultures that cook with them - and quite easy to grow.

### Latin

*Solanum melogena*

Family: Solanaceae

### Difficulty

Easy in a greenhouse or outdoors in hot summers. Moderately difficult without these conditions.

**We Recommend:** Black Beauty : This workhorse variety produces the large, very dark-skinned eggplants that are ideal for moussaka and so many other dishes. Very productive in warm summers.

### Season & Zone

**Season:** Warm season

**Exposure:** Full-sun

**Zone:** 4-10

### Timing

Sow indoors April 1-15th using bottom heat, and keeping seedlings warm. Optimal soil temperature: 24-32°C (75-90°F). Seeds should sprout in 7-12 days.

### Starting

Sow seeds 5mm-1cm (¼-½") deep. Use individual peat or coir pots to reduce root disturbance when transplanting. Transplant with 45-60cm (18-24") between plants. 3 to 5 gallon containers work well.

### Growing

Ideal pH: 5.5-6.0. Soil should have abundant phosphorus and calcium, so add lime and compost to the soil three weeks prior to planting. Mix ¼-½ cup of complete organic fertilizer into the soil beneath each transplant. Using a clear plastic cloche or floating row cover helps growth by increasing heat. Cool temperatures increase leafy growth, but prevent fruit set.

### Harvest

Pinch off blossoms 2 to 4 weeks before first expected frost so that plants channel energy into ripening existing fruit, not producing new ones. Harvest the fruit anytime after the fruit reaches half of their size. Harvesting early prevents fruit from becoming too seedy, and will encourage more production from the plants.

Do not pull the fruit off the plant, but cut it with scissors or secateurs, being careful to avoid any sharp spurs at the stem end.

### Seed Info

Usual seed life: 3 years.

### Diseases & Pests

#### Pests:

Aphids - A hard spray of water can be used to remove aphids from plants. Wash off with water occasionally as needed early in the day. Check for evidence of natural enemies such as gray-brown or bloated parasitized aphids and the presence of larvae of lady beetles and lacewings.

Flea beetles - Control weeds. Use row covers to help protect plants from early damage. Put in place at planting and remove before temperatures get too hot or plants start to flower.

Colorado potato beetles - Handpick beetles, larvae and eggs.

Cutworms - Use cardboard collars around transplants if cutworms are a problem.

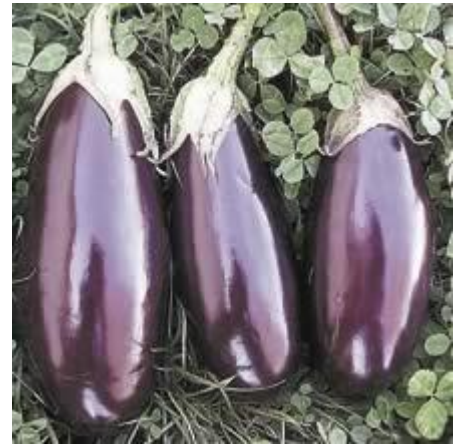
#### Diseases:

Verticillium wilt - This is the most serious disease of eggplant. Remove and destroy an entire infested plant, along with immediately surrounding soil and soil clinging to roots. Set into soil where you have never planted tomatoes, peppers, or strawberries

Tobacco Mosaic Virus - Young growth is malformed and leaves are mottled with yellow. To prevent it, wash hands after handling tobacco before touching plants. Control aphids, which spread the disease.

### Companion Planting

Eggplants are a good companion for amaranth, beans, marigolds, peas, peppers, spinach, and thyme. Do not plant eggplants near fennel.



Eggplants



[Twinkle](#)

