Growing Eggplant in the Home Garden

Growing Eggplant in the home garden will provide you with an abundance of this popular Mediterranean vegetable throughout the warmer months. Eggplants are easy to grow from seed and take only a little room in the garden.

Even though eggplants are considered to be vegetables, they are actually a berry related to both potatoes and tomatoes. They are a member of the nightshade family with a firm purple skin and spongy white flesh.

Eggplants are a perennial in tropical climates however they should be treated as an annual in temperate areas which have frost during the winter as they are frost tender.

The most common variety of eggplant produces large egg-shaped fruit however the long purple varieties are gaining in popularity due to their excellent flavor and tender flesh.

Culinary Uses for Eggplants

Eggplants are commonly used in stews, sauces and dips. Thin strips are simply brushed with oil then grilled. They can be stuffed with tomato, beans and basil then topped with cheese and baked.

The most famous eggplant dish is moussaka which is a traditional Greek dish with a tomato and beef base topped with pan fried eggplant then topped with a cheese sauce.

Growing Eggplant from Seed

Location

Eggplants like a full sun position in moist free draining soil. Improve poor soils with compost or aged manure. If you have clay soils, consider growing your eggplants in a raised bed. In windy areas it would be wise to tie the plants to a stake.

How far apart do you space eggplants?

Space eggplants 27 to 31 inches (70 to 80cm) apart.

When should you plants eggplant seeds?

Eggplant seeds can be raised in punnets towards the end of winter in a warm light position inside. Plant seeds direct after the threat of frosts is over and the soil has warmed towards the end of spring.

Tools and Materials Needed

Eggplant Seeds

Punnets or Seed Trays and Saucer
Seed Raising Mix
Compost or Aged Manure
Shovel
Mulch
Snail Pellets
Liquid Fertilizer

Instructions

Fill the punnets with seed raising mix up to ½ an inch (12mm) from the top then water well. Place in a saucer in a warm place such as a windowsill then sprinkle the seeds over the top. Cover with ¼ inch (5mm) of soil then spritz the top with water. In cooler weather cover the top with plastic.

Keep moist until the seedlings emerge in 7 to 14 days depending on the warmth of the room. Thin plants out to 2 inches (5cm) apart. After 2 weeks spritz the seedlings with a half strength of liquid fertilizer.

When the seedlings are at least 2 inches (5cm) tall they can be planted out as long as the threat of frosts is over. Prepare the soil by adding compost or aged manure then dig in well.

Plant the seedlings 27 to 31 inches (70 to 80cm) apart. Apply an inch of mulch to prevent water loss then water in well. Keep plants moist but not water logged. Protect from slugs and snails with snail pellets.

Apply liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks for the best results. Eggplants will mature in 72 to 85 days from sowing. Picking the eggplants regularly will encourage more fruit. It is best to use sharp scissors when picking eggplants so you don’t damage the rest of the plant.

Pests and Diseases

Many sap sucking bugs such as aphids, whitefly and beetles love the eggplant leaves. Try this homemade natural Aphid Spray using stinging nettles from your garden. It is completely organic and doesn’t cost a thing.

Eggplants are also affected by fungal diseases such as grey mould, leaf spot, Fusarium wilt and root rot. It is always best to practice crop rotation as some fungal diseases can remain in the soil.

Tip

If you live in an area with low rainfall then make a ridge of soil around each eggplant about 12 to 16 inches (30 to 40cm) in diameter. This will help to keep the water where it is needed and will save on water use.