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How to Grow Eggplant: The Complete Guide to Aubergines



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Botani- cal Na me:

Solanum melon- gena

Plant Type:

[Vegetable](#)

Sun Exposure:

[Full Sun](#)

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Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Eggplants

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)
Last Updated: March 14, 2025



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Eggplant is a dark, glossy purple vegetable.

young—or it will get bitter. When cooked, it becomes extremely tender and absorbs flavors around it. See more about growing eggplant—one of our favorites on the grill!

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About Eggplants

Eggplants (*Solanum melongena*) are warm-season vegetables that are treated by most North American gardeners as annuals. Also called aubergine and brinjal in some countries, eggplants have a tropical and subtropical heritage, so they do require relatively high temperatures, similar to [tomatoes](#) and peppers (which, like eggplants, are in the Nightshade family). Eggplant plants grow fastest when temperatures are between 70° and 85°F (21° and 30°C)—and very slowly during cooler weather.

Like tomatoes and peppers, eggplants develop and hang from the branches of a plant that can grow several feet in height.

Because they need warm soil, eggplants are usually purchased as 6- to 8-week-old transplants (or [started indoors](#) about 2 months in advance) to get a head start. Raised beds en-

warms more quickly. Eggplants are also great for containers and make lovely ornamental borders. In fact, there are quite a few ornamental eggplant varieties available today whose inedible fruit have attractive variegated patterns.

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Though eggplant fruit are usually a beautiful dark purple color, they can also be white, pink, green, black, or variegated purple-white. Their size and shape vary as well, ranging from the large, gourd-shaped eggplants you'll commonly find in stores to the more exotic, slender Japanese eggplant.

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PLANTING

Where to Plant Eggplant

For the best results, plant eggplant in a location that gets full sun—at least 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight per day.

Eggplants grow best in a well-draining sandy loam or loam soil that is fairly high in organic matter. To improve soil fertility, mix 1 inch of well-rotted manure, compost, or a general fertilizer such as 5-10-5 throughout the planting bed about a week before planting. (Apply 2 to 3 pounds per 100 square feet. Or, apply 1¼ pounds of 5-10-5 per 10 feet of row when the row spacing is 4 feet.) Soil pH should be between 5.8 and 6.5 for best growth.

Growing Eggplant in Containers

If you're growing eggplant in pots, use a dark-colored container that will absorb more sunlight. Put one plant per 5-gallon (or larger) pot in full sun and outdoors so it can be pollinated. Use a premium potting mix to avoid disease. Raised beds, which warm more

When to Plant Eggplant

- Start seeds indoors in flats or peat pots 6 to 8 weeks prior to the [last spring frost date](#). Seeds germinate quickly at temperatures between 70° to 90°F (21° to 32°C). Alternatively, buy 6- to 8-week-old nursery transplants just before planting.
- Do not plant eggplant transplants into the garden until well after the last threat of frost.
- If purchasing transplants: Buy high-quality specimens. Do not purchase tall, spindly plants or young plants that already have blossoms (ideally, young plants should spend energy becoming established before they begin flowering).

How to Plant Eggplant

- Start seeds indoors, sowing them ¼ inch deep in flats or peat pots.
- After the risk of the last spring frost has passed and daytime temperatures are 70° to 75°F (60° to 65°F at night), set seedlings in holes 24 to 30 inches apart in rows 3 feet apart. Use a covering of black plastic [mulch](#) to warm soils before setting out transplants if soil temperatures aren't yet high enough.

• Immediately after planting (in ground or

from each plant or use cages to provide support and avoid disturbing the soil or roots later. Eggplant will fall over when laden with fruit.

- After planting, water well. Add a layer of mulch to retain moisture and suppress weeds.
- If you live in a cold climate, consider using row covers to keep the young eggplants warm and sheltered. On warm days, open the ends of the row covers so that bees may pollinate the eggplants' flowers.



GROWING

- Water well to moisten the soil to a depth of at least 6 inches so the soil is moist but never soggy. Consistent watering is best, and a soaker hose or drip system at ground level is ideal.
- The critical period for moisture is during fruit set and fruit development. Strangely shaped eggplants result from inconsistent or inadequate watering.
- Mulching can help to provide uniform moisture, conserve water, and reduce weeds.
- Apply a balanced fertilizer every 2 weeks or so.
 - **Note:** Too much nitrogen may cause excessive vegetative growth. If you are using plastic mulch, apply fertilizer through drip irrigation or apply fertilizer to the side of the row.
- For bigger fruits, restrict to five or six per plant, pinching off the extra flowers that develop.
- Eggplant may fall over once loaded with fruit! Be sure to stake tall plants or use a cage to keep the plants upright. If growing

- For a bushier plant, pinch out the terminal growing points, the central points on a plant from which new shoots and leaves grow. Look for the newest (and usually smallest) leaves at the center of the plant and pinch out the bud forming there.
- Eggplants are susceptible to temperature fluctuations: Cool nights (below 55°F/13°C) or hot days (above 95°F/35°C) can cause poor fruiting. Cover plants on cold nights and provide shade (e.g., a beach umbrella) on hot, sunny days. Cold also impairs ripening.

Growing Eggplants in Containers

Eggplant thrives when planted in pots.

Prepare one 5-gallon container per 3-plus-foot-tall plant or a 2-gallon pot for dwarf/miniatures up to 2 feet tall with potting mix and compost or organic matter, as well as a slow-release fertilizer.

Eggplants are a warm-season crop. Start seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before the last frost date or purchase seedlings. Plant outside when the evening temperature is consistently at least 65°F. If no compost or organic matter is added to the potting mix, fertilize seedlings with a (low-nitrogen) 5-10-10 for

mula. Provide support (a tomato cage or wooden stake, with soft ties) for larger plants.

Provide 6 to 8 hours of sun per day. Water consistently but not constantly; allow the plant to dry somewhat between waterings (inconsistent watering may result in irregular fruit shapes). When fruit appears, begin using a 10-10-10 formula every 10 to 14 days. Protect from temperatures below 55°F with cover or by moving.

Types

The standard eggplant produces egg-shaped, glossy, purple-black fruit.

- **‘Black Beauty’** is the traditional eggplant size. One plant produces 4 to 6 large rounded fruit. Other regular types include **‘Black Magic’**, **‘Purple Rain’**, and **‘Early Bird’**.
- **‘Black Bell’**: classic oval to round, 6-inch, purple/black fruit; disease-resistant
- **‘Dusky’**: classic pear-shaped, 6- to 7-inch, glossy purple/black fruit; excellent flavor; disease-resistant

Other interesting eggplant varieties include:

- **‘Bambino’**: oval, walnut-size, purple/black fruit; 1 1/2-foot-tall plants
- **‘Casper’**: cylindrical, 6-inch, snow-white fruit; mushroom flavor
- **‘Cloud Nine’**: teardrop-shaped, 7-inch, white fruit; disease-resistant
- **‘Kermit’**: Thai type; round; 2-inch, green fruit with white-striped shoulder
- **‘Rosita’**: pear-shaped, 6- to 8-inch, rose-pink fruit; sweet flavor

The long, slender Japanese eggplant has a thinner skin and a more delicate flavor.

- **‘Ichiban’**: 10- to 12-inch, slim, purple/black fruit; bears until frost. Expect a dozen or more fruits from one plant.
- **‘Little Fingers’**: finger-sized purple/black fruit; good for containers. Small-fruited varieties tend to be especially heavy bearers.

Ornamental varieties are edible but of poor eating quality.

- **‘Easter Egg’** is an ornamental eggplant, usually white in color. (Not edible.)



HARVESTING

- Harvest eggplant 65 to 80 days after transplanting, depending on the variety. When starting from seed, expect 100 to 120 days to maturity. July, August, and September (even into October) are all harvest months for eggplant, depending on where you live and the variety you planted.
- Eggplant tastes best when harvested young as soon as it's dark and glossy purple. Fruits are ripe when their skin doesn't rebound to gentle pressure from your finger. If you cut into an eggplant and find an abundance of brown seeds, it's already too late.
- Harvest early and often, and the plant will be quite prolific. Once ready, check on your eggplants every 2 to 3 days.
- Japanese eggplant may be ready to harvest when the size of a finger or hot dog.

through the tough stem above the green cap, or calyx, on the top. The calyx can be prickly, so you will want to wear gloves.

- You can cut these plants back like peppers if your season is long enough for a second crop.



Photo by Barcin/Getty Images

How to Store Eggplant

- Eggplants can be stored for up to 2 weeks in humid conditions no lower than 50°F (10°C).
- In the refrigerator, they will keep for several days.
- Do not wash or cut in advance to avoid damaging the skin, which will quickly perish if exposed.
- To avoid discoloring of eggplant after cutting open for cooking or grilling, use a marinade with salt, vinegar, and/or lemon juice.

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PESTS/DISEASES

Eggplant Pests and Diseases

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
Blight (early)	Fungus	Leaves, beginning with lower ones, develop dark, concentric spots, often with yellow outer ring, and eventually die; fruit/stems also may be affected	Destroy infected plants; choose resistant varieties; maintain proper soil fertility; ensure good air circulation; avoid overhead watering; water in morning; disinfect tools; rotate crops
Blight (late)	Fungus	Small, greenish gray, water-	Destroy infected plants; choose re-

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
		brown, some- times with yellow halo; white, fuzzy growth on leaf undersides; stems also af- fected; fruit rots	overhead watering; remove plant de- bris; rotate crops
<u>Blossom-end rot</u>	Disorder	Dark, water- soaked spots on blossom end of fruit (opposite stem) may en- large and be- come sunken and leathery	Caused by lack of calcium in fruit, of- ten due to roots failing to obtain sufficient water and/or nutrients. Remove affected fruit; plant at proper soil temper- ature; water deeply and evenly; use mulch; maintain proper soil pH (around 6.5) and nutrient levels; avoid excessive ni- trogen; provide good drainage; prevent root damage
Colorado potato beetles	Insect	Yellow-orange eggs laid in clus- ters on leaf un- dersides; larvae and adults chew	Handpick; use straw mulch; weed; use row covers; destroy crop residue; ro-

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
<u>Flea beetles</u>	Insect	Numerous tiny holes in leaves, as if hit with shotgun	Use row covers; mulch heavily; add native plants to invite beneficial insects
<u>Powdery mildew</u>	Fungus	Typically, white spots on upper leaf surfaces expand to flour-like coating over entire leaves; foliage may yellow/die; distortion/stunting of leaves/flowers	Destroy infected leaves or plants; choose resistant varieties; plant in full sun, if possible; ensure good air circulation; spray plants with 1 teaspoon baking soda dissolved in 1 quart water; destroy crop residue
<u>Tomato hornworms</u>	Insect	Chewed leaves (initially toward top of plant); rapid defoliation; black/green excrement on plant; gouged fruit	Handpick (leave larvae that have white, ricelike cocoons, which house braconid wasp parasites); till soil in fall and spring; weed; add native plants to invite beneficial insects; grow <u>dill</u> as a trap crop or <u>basil</u> or <u>marigolds</u> as repellents; spray <i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i> (Bt)

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
Whiteflies	Insect	Sticky “honey-dew” (excrement); sooty, black mold; yellow/silver areas on leaves; wilted/stunted plants; distortion; adults fly if disturbed; some species transmit viruses	Remove infested leaves/plants; use handheld vacuum to remove pests; spray water on leaf undersides in morning/evening to knock off pests; monitor adults with yellow sticky traps; spray with insecticidal soap; invite beneficial insects and hummingbirds with native plants; weed; use reflective mulch

Other Common Eggplant Problems

- **Temperature:**
 - If the flowers on your eggplants form but then fall off, or if fruit does not develop, the most likely problem is that the temperatures are too cold.
 - If the fruits are small and not growing, it’s also probably too cold. Eggplants like it hot! Daytime temperatures need to be 80° to 90°F and night time temperatures should not go below 60° to 65°F. If it’s too hot, the plants will wilt and the fruit will be small and bitter.

you may have to replant, depending on the variety.

- **Inconsistent watering:** Strangely-shaped eggplant are the result of inconsistent watering or low moisture.

WIT AND WISDOM

- At one time, it was fashionable for women to use a black dye to stain their teeth a gun-metal gray. The dye probably came from the same dark purple eggplant we see in the marketplace today.
- Use a stainless steel knife (not carbon steel) to cut eggplant, or the flesh will discolor.
- Eggplant originally came in only small, white varieties. Hanging on the plants, the fruit looked like eggs—hence its name.
- Believed to have originated in India, eggplant was introduced to the United States by ever-curious President Thomas Jefferson in 1806 after a friend in France had given him one.

RECIPES

EGGPLANT FRIES

**EGGPLANT, ZUCCHINI AND RED
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EGGPLANT HOAGIES

COOKING NOTES

- Eggplant is excellent grilled, roasted, breaded, fried, or baked! The thinner varieties ('Ichiban') are more ideal for grilling and roasting and the traditional varieties (Black Beauty) are great breaded or fried; the round fruit is also good as a "boat" for stuffing.
- Use a stainless steel knife (not steel) to cut eggplant or it will discolor.
- If your eggplant is oversize, the skin may

flesh. If you're baking eggplant, first pierce the skin a few times to allow steam to escape.

- Many Italians will tenderize an eggplant so it's less bitter. Slice them and sprinkle with salt at least 1 hour before use.

VEGETABLES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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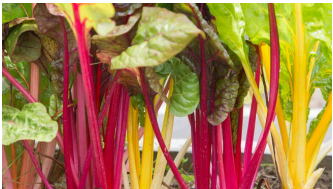
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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Kathleen villella (not verified) 6 months 2 weeks ago

I wrote a question that was not answered. Do eggplants re-seed (or do the plants “come back” after one season?

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REPLY

Joe Bills 6 months 2 weeks ago

Technically, the answer is yes, and the success rate will largely be dictated by the climate where you live. Temperatures are too cool in the majority of North America for eggplant to thrive as a perennial, but in warmer regions they can. For most of us, they are annuals that may occasional provide a surprise. The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers up more details and tips here:

https://plants.usda.gov/DocumentLibrary/plantguide/pdf/pg_some.pdf

Ferdie Jhon Calang (not verified) 2 years 9

months ago

How many eggplant will harvest within 3 months of first harvest, please give an example of variety?
thank you for your reply..

REPLY

The Editors 2 years 9 months ago

As said above, it takes 100 to 120 days to go from seed to harvest (depending on weather, variety, etc). If you transplant, it's 60 to 85 days. Also, as said above, 'Black Beauty' is the traditional eggplant size. One plant produces 4 to 6 large rounded fruit.

REPLY

bob s (not verified) 3 years 1 month ago

Beware of the calyx! (You'll know it when you feel it.)

REPLY

i was reading your article about eggplants and was wondering about the male & female plants. I think I read somewhere of the male has less seeds and is less bitter than the female. Also that end is dimpled in if it's female. Please comment on this. Thanks,,
susan

REPLY

The Editors 3 years 2 months ago

Hi Susan, Thanks for your interest. To answer your question, eggplant fruits are neither male or female. Eggplant produces flowers with both male and female organs. The seeds contained in the fruit will grow into plants that make flowers with both male and female parts. The number of seeds and bitter taste is actually due to an eggplant's maturity. When selecting an eggplant, look for a fruit that is firm, without any bruises or blemishes. Choose an eggplant that is heavy for its size, has a green stem, and springs back when you press on the skin. A ripe eggplant will have a smooth, bright, and glossy skin, and it is best to use soon after harvest/purchase. A dull colored eggplant is a sign that it is over mature, which can

[REPLY](#)

Jansel (not verified) 4 years 1 month ago

I would like to ask permission to cite this website for my agroforestry research. Thank you

[REPLY](#)

jena (not verified) 3 years 6 months ago

when shuld i prune my eggplants

[REPLY](#)

donna Brandel (not verified) 2 years 6 months ago

Can I dig up my plants now and repot them and bring them in the house to where they will get full sun everyday. What kind of soil is best to repot them in.

[REPLY](#)[MORE COMMENTS](#)



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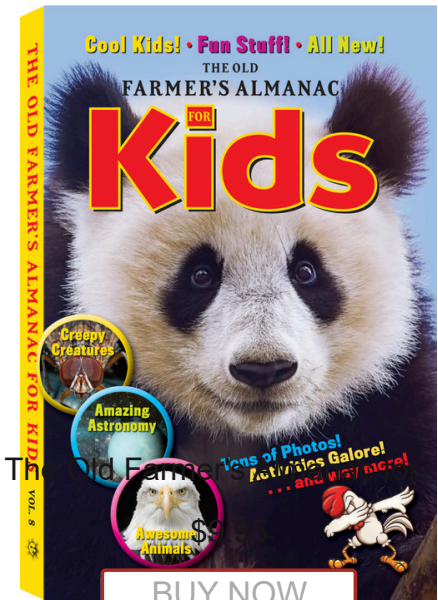
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