

EGGPLANT

Eggplant is a unique vegetable that is a close relative of pepper and tomato. It requires warm weather to grow well. Eggplant primarily is used in several international dishes, and the crop is not as popular in gardens as many other vegetables. Many newer small-fruited or elongated varieties are now available.

Varieties

Large, dark purple oval varieties include Black Beauty, Black Magic, Burpee Hybrid, and White Beauty. Elongated types include Ichiban, Long Tom, Short Tom, and Slim Jim.

When to plant

Eggplant is usually transplanted about the time peppers are set into the garden-- 1-2 weeks later than tomatoes or in early to mid-May in most of Kansas. Eggplant is sensitive to cold temperatures and will not grow well in cool conditions.

Spacing

Eggplant is usually set 2 feet apart in rows at least 3 feet apart.

Care

Eggplant will thrive in hot, dry conditions better than many of its relatives. However, a good soaking in hot weather is beneficial to keep it productive. A strong plant is necessary to support the fruit and to protect it from sunburning. Insects are especially damaging to eggplant foliage. Many leaf-feeding insects will nearly defoliate the plants in a short time; regular inspection and insect control measures are usually necessary.

Harvesting

Select firm fully sized fruit that have a slightly soft touch with a bright and glossy skin. Because the stem that attaches the fruit to the plant is tough and woody, use a pruning shears to cut the fruit loose. Pick off and discard overgrown fruit to keep plants productive.

Common concerns

Flea beetles and other leaf-feeding insects

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