



## Eggplant

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Figure 1: Eggplant. 20180803-AMS-LSC-0882, USDA Photo by Lance Cheung, August 3, 2018, Public Domain

### Environmental Preferences

- Light:** Sunny
- Soil:** Well-drained with high organic matter
- Fertility:** Rich. pH: 6.0 to 7.0
- Temperature:** Warm (70 to 85°F)
- Moisture:** Average

### Culture

- Planting:** Transplant after danger of frost, when soil is thoroughly warm.
- Spacing:** 18 to 24 inches by 30 to 36 inches.
- Fertilizer:** Heavy feeder; use 3 tablespoons of ammonium nitrate 33-0-0 per 10-foot row. Before planting broadcast 3 lbs. 10-10-10 per 100 square feet. Use a starter solution on transplants. Sidedress 1 lb. 10-10-10 per 100

square feet 3 to 4 weeks after planting and repeat in one month if needed. When fruits are swelling, apply a high potash tomato fertilizer.

### Cultural Practices

The standard eggplant produces egg-shaped, glossy, purple-black fruit, 6 to 9 inches long. The long, slender, Japanese eggplant has a thinner skin and more delicate flavor. Both perform well in containers.

Warm to hot weather throughout the season is necessary for good production. Seeds germinate quickly at 70 to 90°F; and plants should be grown for eight to ten weeks before setting them out. Cold temperatures will stop plant and root growth, reducing plant vigor and yields. Use hot caps, cloches, or Wall- O-Water™ to protect plants from cold conditions.

Though eggplants do well in hot weather; they must have well-drained soil and do not thrive in very humid areas. When plants are about 6 inches high, nip back the growing tip to encourage branching. Pick fruits when immature, about 2/3 maximum size. Mature fruit should not be left on the plant as this will reduce overall productivity.

Because of the eggplant's susceptibility to verticillium wilt, rotate plantings with other crops on the same garden soil.

### Common Problems

- Insects:** Flea beetles, aphids, Colorado potato beetle, red spider mites, whitefly.

**Diseases:** Verticillium wilt, anthracnose, phytophthora blight, Tobacco Mosaic Virus.

**Preservation:** Freeze, pickle.

## Acknowledgement

This publication was part of a larger Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 426-312 on Potatoes, Peppers and Eggplants.

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Figure 2: Fairy Tale Eggplant, USDA photo by Hakim Fobia, August 3, 2013, Public Domain

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## Harvesting and Storage

**Days to Maturity:** 100 to 150 days from seed; 70 to 85 days from transplants.

**Harvest:** Fruit should be large, shiny, and uniformly deep purple in color. When the side of the fruit is pressed slightly with the thumbnail and an indentation remains, the fruit is ripe. Long, slender, Japanese eggplant may be ready to harvest from finger or hotdog size. When fruit is dull in color and has brown seeds, it is too ripe and should be discarded. Cut fruit from plant to avoid damage.

**Approximate Yields:** 20 pounds per 10-foot row.

**Amount to Raise:** 12 pounds per person.

**Storage:** Cool (45 to 50°F), moist (90% relative humidity) conditions for one week.