



Seed Savers EXCHANGE

How to Grow Eggplant (*Solanum melongena*)

Eggplant can be a beautiful addition to your garden. Eggplant enjoy a long growing season, but you can extend your season by starting plants indoors.

Time of Planting: It is best to sow eggplant indoors 7-10 weeks before transplanting outside. Start eggplant inside 3-4 weeks before the last frost. Transplant outside 4-6 weeks after the last frost into a warm and sunny location.

Spacing Requirements: Sow eggplant seeds ½ inch deep. Space plants 18-24 inches apart.

Time to Germination: 10-14 days

Special Considerations: Make sure outdoor soil temperatures are at least 55-60 degrees F before transplanting eggplants.

Common Pests and Diseases (and how to manage): Eggplant can suffer damage from aphids, cucumber beetles, flea beetles, anthracnose, and Tobacco Mosaic Virus. To protect against insect predation, transplants can be row covered in the spring.

Harvest (when and how): When harvesting eggplant for fresh eating, pick fruits when they are large but not too firm to the touch. Keep in mind that eggplant need to continue growing far past market maturity if you want to save seeds.

Eating: Eggplant can be roasted, grilled, pureed into baba ghanoush, or fried up as a main course. Its meaty texture withstands long cooking times.

Storing: Eggplant fruits can be stored for about a week in the refrigerator.

How to Save Eggplant Seeds

Eggplants are fairly simple to save seeds from, and gardeners can save seeds from multiple varieties of eggplant at the same time with minimal effort. To extract eggplant seeds, it's helpful to have a food processor or blender.

Life Cycle: Annual

Recommended Isolation Distance: Separate varieties by 300-1,600 feet.

Recommended Population Sizes: To ensure viable seeds, save seeds from at least 1 plant. When maintaining a variety over many generations, save seeds from 5-20 plants. If you're saving seeds for genetic preservation of a rare variety, save seeds from 50 plants or more.

Assessing Seed Maturity: At seed maturity, eggplant fruits generally change color, taking on a yellow or brownish cast, and their glossy skins become dull. Their flesh will soften and ripe fruits easily separate from the plant when pulled.

Harvesting: Simply pull ripe fruits from the plant.

Cleaning and Processing: Seed-mature eggplants can be extracted by cubing the fruits and processing them in a food processor with a small volume of water to make a slurry of seeds and flesh. If seed damage occurs, a dough blade can be used instead of a chopping blade. After blending, pour the seed slurry into a larger container and add more water. Agitating the watery mash will dislodge seeds from the pulp and allow the viable seeds to settle to the bottom of the container. Repeated decanting will remove most of the pulp and any immature seeds. The mature seeds that remain can then be transferred to a strainer and rinsed with a strong stream of water. Immediately after rinsing, seeds should be spread in a thin layer on screens or coffee filters to dry in a warm, well-ventilated space.

Storage and Viability: Store eggplant seeds in cool, dark, and dry place in an airtight container. When stored in these conditions, eggplant seeds will remain viable for 4-6 years.

**For more seed saving and gardening tips, visit:
seedsavers.org/learn**