

# Eggplant at Growing Gardens



**Family:** Solanaceae

**Genus:** Solanum

**Species seen at Growing Gardens:** *S. melongena*

1. Asian
  - Orient Charm
  - Orient Express
2. Italian
  - Rosa Bianca
  - Nadia

## Growing Tips

- Eggplants require a long, warm season to ensure best production possible
- Eggplant is very sensitive to cold weather-it should be planted indoors long before it is planted in the garden (about 8-10 weeks before last frost)
- Plant in full sun and provide ample water and organic matter for the fertile soil
- In two weeks, seed should begin to germinate-when this happens, gradually harden off seedling but do not allow soil temperature to go below 60 degrees F
- Transplant 18 inches apart in garden beds with beds about 3 feet apart to provide enough room for the plant to grow
- Companion plants for eggplant in the garden include the bush bean, peas, peppers, and potatoes
- Cover soil with black plastic mulch to suppress weeds, conserve moisture, and to keep fruit off the ground
- Make sure plant receives ample sunshine
- To aid plant maturation, add compost

## Harvesting Tips

- Eggplant are edible from the time they are about one-third grown and up until they are fully ripe

- Flavor or pungency is not influenced by maturation
- Eggplant skin should be shiny
- Harvest with hand pruners to avoid damaging the plant
- Cut the hard and woody stem from the plant, providing each eggplant with about a one inch stem
- Use care when harvesting eggplant-plant has sharp spine
- Harvest will continue over an extended period if the eggplants are removed when they are the correct size and fully colored
- Once eggplants are fully grown and ripe in color, they remain in edible condition for several weeks
- Use damaged or rotting harvests right away





### Cooking Tips

- Eat up! In addition to being delicious, studies on rabbits have shown that eggplant helps reduce weight, plasma cholesterol levels, and aortic cholesterol content
- Eggplant should be cooked to release the complex flavors and to increase tenderness-when raw, the vegetable is very bitter
- Eggplant skin is tough and should be peeled off-if eggplant is being grilled, keep skin on until after it is cooked to ensure it stays intact
- Slice, cube, or quarter the eggplant and then salt it
  - Salt pulls out juices that carry the bitter flavor and also prevents eggplant from absorbing too much oil and becoming greasy
  - Let sit for an hour in a coriander
  - Rinse salt off and squeeze excess moisture out with hands, and then place between paper towel sheets to dry
- Eggplant can be grilled, roasted, or fried
- Keep in mind, eggplant is one vegetable where undercooking will not provide okay results-eggplant needs to cook fully to ensure best flavor and texture
- Find your favorite recipe and get started!
- Cooking side notes:
  - Asian eggplant, like the Orient Charm and Orient Express found at Growing Gardens, are the best variety's for stir fry
  - Eggplant can also be cut in half and stuffed for a delicious oven-cooked recipe

### Storing Tips

- Try to use eggplants immediately
- The best storing temperature is around 50 degrees F-this makes refrigerators too cold, and room temperature too warm
- If you cannot use eggplant within a week, try wrapping in paper bags to absorb moisture, and storing them in the coldest area of the house (usually the garage)
- Even if eggplant skin appears slightly wrinkled from time off the plant, the inside is usually perfectly fine for eating

Variety	Species	Description
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<p>Orient Charm</p> 	<p>S. melongena</p>	<p>Long, slender fruit varying skin shades of light purple, pastel pink, and white</p>
<p>Orient Express</p> 	<p>S. melongena</p>	<p>Long, slender fruit with dark purple and glossy skin, tender, quick cooking</p>
<p>Rosa Bianca</p> 	<p>S. melongena</p>	<p>Round fruit with light purple skin streaked with areas of white, best adapted to regions with warm nights</p>
<p>Nadia</p> 	<p>S. melongena</p>	<p>Dark purple, skin is glossy, should be blemish free</p>

References:

**Johnny's Selected Seeds**

<http://johnnyseeds.com>

**Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet, Horticulture and Crop Science**

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1609.html>

**Colorado State University Extension**

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/07616.html>

**USA Gardener**

[http://usagardener.com/how\\_to\\_grow\\_vegetables/how\\_to\\_grow\\_eggplant.php](http://usagardener.com/how_to_grow_vegetables/how_to_grow_eggplant.php)