

## **Eggplant by Cliff Winter**

### **Variety: Black Beauty**

Botanical Name: *Solanum melongena*

Family: Solanaceae

As one of the most popular cultivars, Black Beauty eggplant info abounds. Dating back to the early 1900s, this variety of open-pollinated and heirloom eggplant has been a favorite for vegetable gardeners throughout decades. When picked at peak maturity, these large glossy fruits offer impressive yields. Early to mature, Black Beauty eggplants are a well-suited option for those with shorter growing seasons. Black Beauty seeds should be started indoors at least 8-10 weeks before the average last frost date



Eggplants requires 100 to 140 warm days with temperatures consistently between 70° and 90°F to reach harvest. Plant in full sun. When transplanting, it should be no sooner than 2 to 3 weeks after the last frost in spring. Eggplants that are planted too early will not develop. They grow best in well-drained soil rich in organic matter. Add aged compost or commercial organic planting mix to beds ahead of planting and turn the soil to 12 inches deep. A soil pH of 5.5 to 6.8 is recommended. Warm the soil in advance by laying black plastic over planting beds for two weeks. Make a hole twice the width of the root ball and half again as deep. Moisten the hole before transplanting. Sprinkle a 5-10-5 or 5-10-10 organic fertilizer in the bottom of the hole and cover lightly with aged compost or planting mix, then set the seedling in place at the same depth they are growing in their containers. Firm the soil in around the root ball and gently water the plant. Create a small basin around the seedling to direct water to roots at watering time. Set a stake or small tomato cage in place to support the plant as it grows. Eggplants loaded with fruit can tip or fall over; it's best to support them. Space eggplants 24 to 36 inches apart. Space rows 24 to 36 inches apart.

Eggplants are easily grown in containers of at least 12 inches across and as deep. Choose a smaller growing variety for container growing. Be sure to keep the potting soil just moist through the season. Do not let the soil dry out. Feed eggplants in containers every two to three weeks with compost tea or dilute solution of fish emulsion. Container grown eggplants are easily moved out of cold weather; so, you can extend the season in spring and autumn by moving plants indoors when frost threatens.

### **Some other useful information for growing eggplants:**

- Harvest eggplant young before the flesh becomes pithy.
- Eggplants are ready for harvest when the fruit is glossy, firm, and full-colored.
- Eggplants with no seeds are immature. Fruits with hard, dark seeds are overripe.
- Eggplants that are under or overripe will be bitter tasting.
- Cut eggplants from the stem with a pruning shear or sharp knife. Leave a short stub of stem attached to the fruit.

Now is the time for Fall planting. Good luck and enjoy this traditional vegetable.

Reference: [https://harvesttotable.com/how\\_to\\_grow\\_eggplant/](https://harvesttotable.com/how_to_grow_eggplant/) Photo credit: Cliff Winter