



Okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus*)

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Okra is an annual vegetable that has many seeds in its green or red pod shape. It is a visually appealing, upright plant that grows quite tall (4-6 ft) with beautiful yellow flowers while providing ornamental appeal in gardens. Okra is part of the hibiscus genus family and a member of the mallow family and is often called “lady’s fingers”

Okra is a powerhouse of valuable nutrients. It is used to thicken soups and stews and is also enjoyed as a cooked vegetable. Nearly half of which is soluble fiber that helps to lower serum cholesterol, reducing the risk of heart disease. It also aids a healthy intestinal tract decreasing the risk of some forms of cancer, especially colorectal cancer. Nearly 10% of the recommended levels of vitamin B6 and folic acid are also present in a half cup of cooked okra.



Plant Requirements

Type	Annual seed or bedding plant
Hardiness Zone	6-11
Sun	full sun with temperatures 75 degrees or warmer
Bloom Time	Mid-summer to late fall
Height	3'-6'
Spread	1' - 2'
Tolerance	okra loves heat!
Attracts	While self-pollinating, bees and other pollinating insects are attracted to the plant.

Soil and Site Recommendations

- Drainage: does well in good garden soil with good drainage
- PH: 5-6.5
- Type: okra likes acidic to neutral soil. Does best in loam but can thrive in poor soil as long as there is good drainage.

Planting Recommendations

- Type: if planting okra seeds, soak overnight in water before planting
- When to plant: when temps are warm
- Depth of planting: 3/4"- 1"



- Mulching: keep area around okra weed free
- Spacing: 8-12”
- Spread: upright growth pattern
- Division/transplant tips: if using seeds, plant in groups of 3 seeds and snip off 2 seedlings when plants are 1” tall

Maintenance

- Watering: Okra needs 1-2” of water per week and more if temperatures are particularly hot and dry
- Fertilization: High requirement for nutrients, either from soil organic matter or fertilizers. Needs a continuous supply of nitrogen for a prolonged pod set.
- Pinching/Deadheading: When plants are about 24” tall, pinch off growing points to promote branching and yield of more okra.

Harvest and Storage

- Harvest young and tender 2 - 4-inch-long pods approximately one to three days after the flowers open, before pods get woody (they become tough). For a continuous harvest, remove any over-mature pods so plants will continue to bloom and produce.
- Refrigerate unwashed, dry okra pods in the vegetable crisper, loosely wrapped in perforated plastic bags. Wet pods will quickly mold and become slimy. Okra will keep for only two or three days.
- Blanching and Freezing is the best method for long term storage of okra.

Common Problems

- Disease: powdery mildew
- Insects: Aphids and potato bugs
- <http://apps.extension.umn.edu/garden/diagnose/insect/garden/>

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Okra with Tomatoes

1. Saute 4 smashed garlic cloves in 3 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat until golden.
2. Add 4 cups okra (halved lengthwise) and 1 small onion (cut into wedges)
3. Season with salt and pepper and cook until the okra is tender and bright, 10 to 12 minutes.
4. Add 1 pint halved cherry tomatoes; cook until just bursting, 3 minutes.
5. Finish with a splash of cider vinegar.