



HAWAII COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

HOME GARDEN VEGETABLE SERIES No. 13

EGGPLANT

by Jack S. Tanaka & Richard T. Sakuoka*

Eggplant can be grown the whole year in Hawaii because it is essentially a warm weather crop that requires a relatively long growing period. Eggplants do best under warm growing conditions at temperatures between 70° F. and 85° F.

Types of eggplant that can be grown in the home garden are the long, round, or oval, and small, pickling types. The long type has fruit 8- to 15-inches long and 1¼- to 1¾-inches in diameter; the round or oval type has fruit 3¼- to 4-inches in diameter, 5- to 6-inches in length, weighing ½- to 1-pound; the small, pickling type has fruit 2- to 4-inches long and 2-inches in diameter.

Varieties to Plant

For the long type plant Waimanalo Long. For the round type (or oval) plant Florida Market, Burpee Hybrid, Black Beauty or most any variety sold in the garden stores. For the small, pickling type plant Black Egg, or Money Maker.

Soil Management & Fertilization

A fertile, well-drained soil with a pH of 5.5 to 6.8 is desirable for the production of eggplant. If the soil is not naturally fertile, apply 10- to 20-pounds of manure or compost, or 1- to 1½-pounds of a garden fertilizer such as 10-30-10 per 100 square feet of garden area work into the soil prior to planting.

Apply a second fertilizer application of 1- to 1½-pounds of 10-30-10 or 10-20-20 fertilizer after the first fruit set. Apply it in a circle 6- to 8-inches wide from the base of the plant and 3- to 4-inches deep. Apply additional fertilizer once every two weeks after harvest to improve fruit size and plant vigor. Sulphate of ammonia could be used as top-dressing with 1- to 2-tablespoonsful per plant applied 8- to 12-inches from the base.

Planting

Eggplant is usually transplanted rather than direct

seeded into the garden. Plant seeds in seedling flats, beds or pots. Starting two weeks after germination, fertilize the seedlings weekly, preferably with a solution of about 1-tablespoonsful of a water-soluble fertilizer in a gallon of water. The seedlings will be ready to transplant in about 6- to 8-weeks. Set the plants 24- to 36-inches apart in rows spaced 36- to 48-inches apart. Pickling type eggplant can be set 18- to 24-inches apart in rows spaced 30-inches apart. Set the seedling at the same depth as in the seedbed, flat or pot, and firm the soil around the roots. It is beneficial to use a starter solution (water-soluble, high phosphate fertilizer) at the time of transplanting. Approximate number of days from transplanting to harvest is 70- to 90-days.

Cultivation & Irrigation

Only shallow cultivation to remove weeds or to work in top dressing of fertilizer is necessary. Irrigate an average of 1- to 2-times a week when plants are growing. As a rule, lighter soil requires more frequent irrigation than does heavier soil. After fruit set, increase irrigation to 2- to 3-times per week with heavy soaking.

Pest Management

Insects most commonly found infesting eggplants are leafminers, rose and flea beetles, aphids, and mites. These pests can be controlled with malathion or carbaryl (Sevin) sprays. Sulfur dusts or sprays will also help control the mites.

Bacterial wilt is a serious disease of eggplant. If bacterial wilt organism is present in the soil, eggplant should not be planted. There is no chemical control or commercial eggplant variety resistant to the disease.

CAUTION: When using pesticide chemicals, read the label carefully and follow the directions for use, storage, disposal and all other precautionary measures.

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Harvesting

Fruits of the eggplant are edible from the time they are one-third grown until they are ripe. Fruits should be harvested before the seeds become mature. A heavier crop will be produced if the fruits are harvested before they reach full size. The length of the harvest period will depend upon the care given to the plants, but the average harvest period is from 3- to 4-months.

Seed Availability

Seed of Waimanalo Long is available from the De-

partment of Horticulture of the University of Hawaii and at some garden shops. Pickling eggplant seed is available from Japanese seed companies. Seed of other varieties is available from garden shops or from mainland seed companies.

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NOTE: Trade names are used only for the convenience of the reader and does not constitute an endorsement of the products by the University of Hawaii, College of Tropical Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, or by any of its personnel.

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