

# Easy Gardening...Okra

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Okra is a warm season vegetable which grows well in most Texas soils. For good yields, okra must grow in full sunlight in a well drained, fertile soil.

### Soil Preparation

Spade or turn the soil as deeply as possible. Okra will grow best in soil which has been worked 8-10 inches deep. Remove rocks and trash, and rake the soil smooth. Work the soil only when it is dry enough not to stick to garden tools.

### Fertilizing

Before planting, use 2-3 pounds of fertilizer such as 10-20-10 for each 100 square feet of garden area. Spread the fertilizer evenly over the area. Mix it well into the top 3-4 inches of soil.

### Varieties

- Louisiana Green Velvet
- Emerald
- Clemson Spineless

### Planting

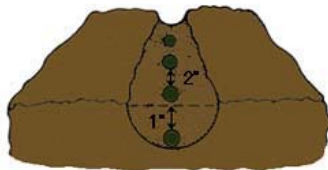


Figure 1. Plant okra seed about 2 inches apart and 1 inch deep.

For best yields, plant okra in the spring 2-3 weeks after all danger of frost has passed. For a good fall crop, plant at least 3 months before the first fall frost. Plant okra seed about 1 inch deep and 2 inches apart in the row. See figure 1. Space the rows at least 3 feet apart. When the okra is up and growing, thin the plants so that they are about 1 foot apart. See figure 2.

### Watering

Okra will do fairly well under dry conditions. However, watering every 7-10 days will give higher yields. Sandy soils usually will need water more often than clay soils.

### Care During the Season

Cultivate around the okra plants to remove weeds and grass. Hand pull weeds close to the plants to avoid damaging the roots of the okra. After the first harvest, apply 1 cup of garden fertilizer for each 10 feet of row. Scatter the fertilizer evenly between the rows. Mix it lightly with the soil. Water the plants after fertilizing.

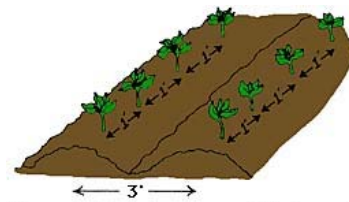




Figure 2. Plant okra in rows 3 feet apart. After the plants are 3-4 inches tall, thin them to 1 foot between the plants.

### Insects

Name and description		Control
 <b>Stink bug</b>	brown, green or black; shield shaped; usually about 1/2 inch long; discharge a foul odor; suck plant juice	Sevin
 <b>Aphid</b>	1/8 inch long; softbodied; green, pink, red or brown; usually on underside of leaves; sucks plant juices	Malathion

Before using a pesticide read the label. Always follow cautions, warnings and directions.

### Harvesting

The okra will produce large flowers about 2 months after planting. The okra pods will be ready to pick 3-4 days later. Harvest the pods when they are 3-4 inches long. If the okra gets too large, it will be tough and stringy. Pick the okra every 1-2 days or yields will be decreased. See figure 3.

#### **Serving**

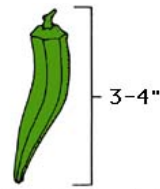
Okra is a fair source of Vitamin A. It can be eaten in many ways, including boiled, fried and cooked in soups, gumbos and casseroles.

#### **Storing**

Okra can be stored for 3-5 days in the refrigerator. Okra which is too mature can be dried, cured and used in flower arrangements.

#### **Clean-Up**

Okra seed is easily saved for next season by leaving some of the last pods on the plant until they get very large. Remove them and allow them to dry. The seeds will shell easily from the pods. Other plant material such as leaves and stems can be put in a compost pile.



**Figure 3. Harvest okra when it is about 3-4 inches long.**

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Hypertext markup by Tammy Kohlleppel, Gretchen Eagle and Dan Lineberger. <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/easygardening/okra/okra.html>