

ENDIVE (*Cichorium Endivia*)



Full Sun



Part Shade



ENDIVE

Often called escarole (which has wider leaves), this salad plant will succeed in any ordinary garden soil not deficient in humus and normal moisture.

Like lettuce, its succulent growth must be rather rapid to enable it to form tender leaves. On poor, dry, exposed soil its growth will be slowed up so that its leaves, if they form in quantity, will be tough and unnecessarily pungent.

For success in growing endive, use the same area where lettuce succeeded early in the spring, and add a thin layer of compost between the rows.

Planting

Seed should be thinly sown, covered with not more than 1/3 inch of finely sifted, mature compost humus, clean sand, or a mixture of the two. To make the job easier, seed, sand and humus may be well mixed in a container and then spread along the bottom of a shallow trench. The rows should be placed about one foot apart and the plants thinned to stand one foot apart in the row. For a fall crop, seed must be sown in late summer.

You may find it best to raise endive in a flat or similar container set in a partly shaded spot, or by using a shaded seedbed. Flats and seedbeds may be protected from excessive summer heat by stretching cheesecloth over them. When transplanting the young plants to the garden, be sure they are set slightly deeper than they were in the flat and are well firmed. A little work with the hoe to keep down weeds, or a light mulching of straw or rough compost, is about all the cultivation the plants need.

Blanching

The slightly bitter, unappetizing flavor of the leaves can be eliminated by blanching. This may be accomplished by inverting flowerpots over the plants, by placing foot-wide planks on edge so that they cover the row with a light-tight miniature roof, or by tying up the heads when the plant is about half-grown and the head fairly well formed. To do this, draw together the long outer leaves and tie them with soft string or a strip of muslin. The plants should remain covered or tied for about three weeks.

Plants that reach maturity in late fall should be gently dug up with a good ball of earth around their roots and set in a dark corner of a cool, unheated cellar. Here the heads will soon blanch without the necessity of tying.

Although blanching reduces the bitterness natural to the leaf, it also reduces its food value. The green, unblanched outer leaves are rich in vitamins A, B, and C. The bitterness of these outer leaves can become a savory asset when cooked in soups with a flavor and with greens. They can also be used to add distinction to the salad bowl.

Varieties

Green Curled and Broad Leaved Batavian both reach maturity at 90 days. Each has rich green, firm leaves that are excellent in salads. Salad King (98 days) has bright green leaves that blanch to creamy white.