



**CORNELL
COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION OF
ONEIDA COUNTY**

HOME GROWN FACTS

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GROWING CELERY



Perhaps the most difficult vegetable to grow in many areas, this long-season crop must be started inside. Seeds are slow to germinate, and if transplanted outside too early, plants will bolt in response to cold. Also requires consistent moisture and dislikes heat.

Site Characteristics

Sunlight:

- Prefers full sun
- part shade

Soil conditions:

- tolerates damp soil
- requires high fertility

Prefers rich soil, high in organic matter with pH 6.0 to 7.0 and consistent, plentiful supply of moisture. Can tolerate soils that are less than well-drained because it was originally a wetland plant.

Plant Traits

Lifecycle: annual; Biennial grown as an annual.

Ease-of-care: difficult

Seeds need to be started inside and are difficult to germinate. Cold weather after transplanting can cause bolting. Needs plentiful moisture and long season, but doesn't tolerate heat well.

Foliage color: medium green

Foliage texture: medium

Shape:

- cushion, mound or clump
- upright

Tolerates:

- frost - Will tolerate light frost but can be damaged by a moderate frost.

Growing Information

How to plant:

Propagate by seed

Germination temperature: 70 F to 75 F - Optimum when starting indoors.

Days to emergence: 14 to 21

Seed can be saved 5 years.

Helping You Put Knowledge to Work

Maintenance and care:

Start plants inside about 10 to 12 weeks before last frost. Plant several seeds per cell. Seeds need light to germinate, so don't cover seed deeply. Keep soil moist and warm (about 70 F to 75 F) until seeds germinate in 2 to 3 weeks. After germination, grow inside in a cool location (about 60 F to 70 F). Thin to one seed per cell.

Plants will withstand light frost, but 10 days with night temperatures below 40 and days below 55 F can cause bolting. So harden plants by reducing water, not lowering temperature.

Set out transplants 6 to 12 inches apart, rows 18 to 36 inches apart, about 2 weeks before average last frost.

Plants are shallow-rooted and require consistent moisture. Lack of water will make stalks fibrous and bitter. Mulch to retain moisture, suppress weeds and avoid disturbing roots when cultivating.

For a milder flavor, blanch by wrapping stalks two weeks before harvest with paper, a cardboard milk carton or other material.

Pests:

- Aphids
- Tarnished plant bug
- Cabbage loopers
- Whiteflies
- Cutworms

Use floating row covers early in the season, and collars if cutworms are present.

Diseases:

- Leaf blights
- Celery mosaic
- Black heart - calcium deficiency, add lime

Celery diseases are rarely a problem in home gardens

Varieties

Look for different days to maturity, bolt-resistance, and color - green, red or yellow "self-blanching" types. Celeriac or root celery is a different variety of the same species grown for its root.

Source: <http://www.explore.cornell.edu> 2006

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