

How to Grow Barley

<http://www.heirloom-organics.com/guide/va/guidetogrowingbarley.html>

Overview

Nutritious, delicious and easy to cultivate, barley is a common sweet grain with loads of health benefits and a variety of purposes. Barley takes little time and energy, grows quickly and is quite cheap. Even black thumbs can successfully sprout this wholesome grain.

GROWING NOTES

Barley grows best in cool ground - ideal temperatures hover right around freezing.

For winter barley, October is the best time to plant. For spring barley, plant in January.

Sow the seeds in the rows, ensuring that there are 20 to 25 seeds per square foot of space.

Note: another source - 50-100 lbs / A ; 1"-2" dp ; 5" spacing

Grow barley as you would wheat. Some varieties are spring planted and some are fall planted. Barley ripens sooner than wheat; spring-planted barley ripens in 60 to 70 days, fall-planted barley about 60 days after spring growth begins. Barley thus fits well into a double-cropping scheme and a variety of crop rotations. Be careful when planting barley with a drill because bearded varieties may cause planting tubes to clog.

Barley is harvested the same as wheat: cut, bundled and shocked to dry. Wear a shirt when harvesting barley as the awns can irritate your skin. Barley may be stored in the bundle and fed to stock without threshing.

MAINTAINING

Keep out weeds by weeding by hand for a small crop. An application of herbicide may be necessary for a large crop to keep out the weeds.

Barley does not require too much watering. Too much watering can lead to decomposition.

HARVESTING

Barley has reached full harvest (or maturity) when it's golden in color and brittle. Barley moves easily in wind and resembles a wheat field. After you cut the barley plants, your next move depends entirely on your intended use. If you plan on using it as animal feed, chances are you have a machine to help with the cutting. If you are malting it (for beer, other alcohol and malted foods), it also may be a mass production for which you have helpful tools. For human food, cut the barley plants manually.

Harvesting is generally done manually by using sickle. Harvesting time of barley is depending on the time of sowing, cropping period and maturity. Generally cropping period of barley in the hills is varies from 6-7 month. So, rabi barley is harvested from the end of April to end of May and the summer barley is harvested by September - October. Barley is more prone to shattering. So, in a order to reduce this type of loss, barley crop should be harvested before being fully matured and in the morning hours.

SAVING SEEDS

All varieties are out-crossing plants that are wind pollinated and will cross readily with one another. If you wish to save seed that will be strong for the long haul, you will need to plant it in large blocks of around 500 plants, save the best 100 cobs and mix the seed from those cobs, to take next years seed from. Hand pollination is possible.