

How to Grow Lentils

<http://www.growthis.com/how-to-grow-lentils/>

Posted on June 6, 2013

Lentils are a highly nutritious legume closely related to peas and all types of beans. They require specific growing conditions, but are otherwise relatively easy to care for. Here's how to grow lentils of your very own.

LENTIL VARIETIES

Lentils are generally either large or small and there are lots of varieties within each of these types. Consult with local growers to find out if there is a specific variety more suitable for your area. Lentils can take several months to mature, so check maturation dates on the seed packet to be sure you have enough time in your growing season.

Shoot for about 4-8 lentil plants per household member.

WHEN TO GROW

Lentils can be direct sown indoors 2 weeks prior to the last average frost date for your area. They can also be started indoors and transferred outside once the seedlings have been established. Ideal germination temperature is 68° F. Lentils will need 80 – 110 days to mature.

WHERE TO GROW

Lentils like cool temperatures but not frost. They do well in temperate climates with low humidity. They can grow in the north during the summer and the south over the winter.

Choose a spot in the garden that receives full sun. Do not plant lentils where other legumes have recently grown. Lentils grow well with cucumbers, potatoes and summer savory. Do not plant them with onions or garlic.

SOIL

Lentils do well in loose, well drained soil with a neutral to slightly alkaline pH (6.0 – 8.0). Add mature compost before planting. Lentils need fertile soil in order to thrive.

PLANTING

Lentils can be grown from seed or transplants. They need about 10 days at 68° F for proper germination. Sow seeds about 1/2 - 1 inch deep, 1 inch apart. Thin to the healthiest seedlings and space them about 5 inches apart. Rows can be spaced 18 - 24 inches apart.

Use row covers to protect seedlings from late frosts.

WATERING & CARE

Lentils can handle drought better than other beans but they prefer consistently moist soil. Once the pods begin to dry, stop watering.

SUPPORT

Lentils will need a low trellis to support their vines. If you don't use a trellis, they will need a little extra space between plants. However, using a trellis helps deter pests, lowers the risk of plant disease and can make for a much stronger yield.

FERTILIZING

Lentils do not need much fertilizer if planted in rich, fertile soil. Side dress them with a little compost tea when they reach 5 inches tall and again as they begin to flower.

HARVESTING

Lentils can be harvested for use as dry beans or when still green, like snap peas. To use them as dry beans, wait the entire maturation period (about 110 days) and harvest the pods once they are hardened.

Keep them unshelled until ready for use. If you intend to use them like peas, they should be ready after 70 – 80 days.

TIPS & ADVICE

Watch out for aphids, which can be a problem to lentils. Pinch them off or blast them off with water as you see them.

Proper crop rotation and companion planting is necessary to prevent disease and pests with lentils.

Lentils need good air circulation and can develop mildew if planted too close together.

Lentils can tolerate a light frost but it is not encouraged.

Lentils will grow in containers but require several plants for a worthwhile yield.

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[http://www.harvesttotable.com/2009/07/how\\_to\\_grow\\_lentil/](http://www.harvesttotable.com/2009/07/how_to_grow_lentil/)

Lentils are a cool-season legume. Sow lentils in spring as early as 2 weeks before the average last frost date. Lentils can be started indoors before transplanting to the garden; lentil seeds will germinate in 10 days at 68°F. Lentils require 80 to 110 days to come to harvest.

**Description.** Lentils are a hardy annual; they are a member of the pea family. Lentils grow on sparsely branched vines from 18 to 24 inches tall. The lentil has small whitish to light purple pea-like flowers. Pods are small, broad, flat and contain one or two flat, lens-shaped seed that are green or yellow to orange, red or brown.

**Yield.** Plant 4 to 8 lentils per household member.

**Site.** Plant lentils in full sun. Lentils prefer loose, well-drained soil rich in organic matter. They will grow in poor soil. Lentils grow best in a soil with a pH between 6.0 and 6.5. Add aged compost to planting beds before sowing.

**Planting time.** Lentils grow best in cool weather. Sow lentils in spring as early as 2 to 3 weeks before the average last frost date. Lentils can be started indoors before transplanting to the garden; lentil seeds will germinate in 10 days at 68°F. Lentils require 80 to 110 days to come to harvest.

**Planting and spacing.** Plant lentil seeds ½ to 1 inch deep, spaced 1 inch apart. Thin successful seedlings to 4 to 5 inches apart. Space rows 18 to 24 inches apart.

**Water and feeding.** Keep lentils evenly moist. Lentils are more drought tolerant than other beans. Do not water lentils once pods have begun to dry. Add aged compost to planting beds before sowing. Side dress lentils with compost tea when plants are 5 inches tall and again at flowering.

**Companion plants.** Potatoes, cucumbers, summer savory. Avoid planting lentils with onions or garlic.

**Care.** Support lentils with a low trellis. Without a trellis, lentils should be set 5 inches apart to ensure ample air circulation. Protect early crops from pests and frost with row covers.

**Container growing.** Lentils can be grown in containers, but several plants are required for a practical yield. Grow plants in pots at least 8 inches deep.

**Pests.** Aphids may attack lentils. Control aphids by pinching out infested areas or hose them off of the plant with a blast of water. Weevils may attack lentils; remove and destroy infested plants. Rotate crops to avoid repeat infestations.

**Diseases.** Lentils have no serious disease problems. Mildew may attack lentils that are too closely planted.

**Harvest.** Lentils are commonly used like dry beans or peas. For dried seeds, harvest pods when they have matured and hardened. Leave lentils unshelled until you are ready to use them. Dried lentils are ready for harvest 110 days after sowing. Lentil also can be used like snap beans; harvest these green about 70 to 80 days after sowing.

**Varieties.** Lentils can be divided into large lentils and small lentils. There are dozens of varieties of each type. Three common lentil varieties are flat brown ones, small yellow ones, and large pea-shaped ones.

**Storing and preserving.** Unshelled green-pod lentils will keep in the refrigerator for one week. Dried, shelled lentils can be stored in a cool, dry place for 10 to 12 months. Lentils can also be sprouted.

**Common name.** Lentil

**Botanical name.** *Lens culinaris*

**Origin.** Mediterranean region