

## GROWING GUIDE FOR AMARANTH

<b>Binomial Name:</b>	Amaranthus hybridus
<b>Varieties:</b>	Grain Amaranth, Love-Lies-Bleeding Amaranth
<b>Start:</b>	Direct seed
<b>Germination:</b>	8 - 12 days, 15°C to 30°C
<b>Seed Life (viability):</b>	3 - 10 years
<b>Soil:</b>	Well drained, rich in nitrogen & phosphorous
<b>Sunlight:</b>	Full sun
<b>Sow Seeds:</b>	5mm deep, 8-10cm apart in rows 45cm apart.
<b>Transplant/Thin to:</b>	15 - 30cm apart
<b>Ave. Days to Harvest:</b>	Young greens in 30-40. Flowers in 45-70. Grain - 75 to 110
<b>Good Companions:</b>	Corn, carrots, beetroot, radish, onion, potato
<b>Bad Companions:</b>	

### Sowing & Planting:

The amaranth family includes flowers, herbs, and weeds. Some varieties are grown and harvested for food. The seeds of the "Grain Amaranth" were harvested by Aztec and Inca tribes in Central and South America. In Asia and South America Amaranth is cultivated as a grain crop.

Amaranth is very responsive to nitrogen and phosphorous. Plants grown in average garden soil will be 1.2 to 1.8m tall, while those grown in rich soil or compost may reach over 2.5m. Optimum soil is a well-drained loam but plants will do well in all but poorly aerated clay soils.

Amaranth is grown from seed. Amaranth seeds are best directly seeded into your flower garden but can also be started indoors for transplanting later.

Amaranth plants are susceptible to frost and prefers warm weather. If planting outdoors, sow Amaranth seeds after the soil has begun to warm in the spring. Indoors, start six to eight weeks before the last frost in your area.

Sow seeds early in the season and cover lightly with soil. Final space seeds or seedlings at 15 to 30cm apart. They will tolerate a little crowding and look good in clumps or groups. Since the seed is very small, you can avoid considerable thinning by mixing it with sand or radish seed before sowing, as is sometimes done with carrots.

### Growing:

Amaranth is very easy to grow. It prefers a warm climate, full sun and a well drained soil. Water well during dry periods, once or twice per week, although Amaranth is pretty heat and drought tolerant.

Add a general purpose fertilizer once or twice a season. Amaranth is a low-maintenance crop but weeds, especially at the beginning, should be discouraged by cultivation or mulching.

## **Harvesting:**

Amaranth keeps on flowering until hit by the first hard frost. Seed will often ripen many weeks before that, usually after about three months. The best way to determine if seed is harvestable is to gently but briskly shake or rub the flower heads between your hands and see if the seeds fall readily (numerous small and appreciative birds may also give hints as to when to start doing this).

An easy way to gather ripe grain is, in dry weather, to bend the plants over a bucket and rub the seed heads between your hands. Another threshing method is to rub the flower heads through screening into a wheelbarrow and then to blow away the finer chaff using a strong fan. Cutting and hanging plants to dry indoors does not work very well - the plants become extremely bristly and it is difficult to separate the seed from the chaff.

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