



Growing Leeks

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Leeks are in the allium family along with onions, garlic, chives and shallots. They are a superfood prized for their sweet mild flavor.

They resemble large scallions with thick white stalks. The white stalks and the light green base are edible. The dark green leaves can be tied in a bundle, along with other herbs, to make a bouquet garni to flavor soups, stews, and brines.

Leeks are a frost tolerant, cool-season vegetable. They can be grown from seeds or starts. They thrive in full sun, and a fertile, well-drained soil kept consistently moist. Incorporate compost into your planting area beforehand. For the thickest stems, space seedlings six to eight inches apart, deep into the soil.

Leeks need to be blanched by piling the soil up around the stem to the base of the leaves. Blanching hides the stems from the sun and produces good flavor. As they grow, continue to mound the soil up around the stems.

Generally, there aren't many problems with leeks but keep watch for slugs, and in excessively wet weather, watch for leek rust or leaf rot. Leek rust is a fungal disease that produces raised orange spots on the leaves. You can remove the leaves that are affected and the foliage will continue to grow. Leaf rot produces white spots at the leaf tips and there isn't a cure. In that case, pull plants.

Some varieties to consider (80-120 days):

Main fall varieties (August through October): American Flag, Jolant, Kilima, King Richard, Primor.

Late fall - winter (October through December): Derrick, Electra, Goldina, Goliath, Kilima, Tivi, Wintereuzen.

Overwinter (spring harvest): Carina.

Happy Gardening!

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