

❖ Renee's Garden ❖

Leek Growing Guide

Soil Preparation and Planting

Leeks require full sun, good drainage and soil rich in nitrogen. Leeks grow best on raised beds or raised rows at least 4" high and 20" wide.

First, pull all weeds and work the soil, so it is loose and crumbly. Work in compost or well-aged manure to improve aeration, moisture retention and drainage and then amend with a good source of granular, high nitrogen organic fertilizer, like Down to Earth Bio Fish.

Cut a deep 6- to 8-inch furrow in the soil with a shovel or trowel. Drop in leek plant 6 inches apart. Fill in the soil, covering plants so just one or 2 inches of the plant are still above the soil line. Firm soil around the plant and water in well.

Leeks are heavy feeders. As plants grow and begin to develop, plan to feed them at least once a month with a high nitrogen liquid fertilizer such as Dr. Earth Nitro Big Organic Liquid Plant Food. Be sure to apply all fertilizers according to suggested rates.

Watering and Weeding

Water leek plants regularly throughout their growth

ON ARRIVAL: Remove leek plants from the shipping box immediately. While they may appear dry, they're simply dormant. Plant your leeks within a week of arrival if possible - they can be kept for up to several weeks if necessary.

DO NOT put the plants in soil or water before planting. Keep in a well-ventilated, cool area until you can plant them.

cycle. A good way to tell if watering is necessary is to put your finger in the soil near the plants. If the soil is dry below your first finger joint, it's time to water. Drip irrigation is a good way to stay on top of water needs and helps discourage foliar diseases.

Weed control is especially important early in the growing season to prevent competition for nutrients. Mulch plants with a light layer of organic material like straw or wood chips to help control weeds and preserve moisture.

Harvesting

Harvest leeks as slim babies to steam whole or quickly grill on the barbecue. You can encourage long white shanks on your leeks by piling loose dirt around the shafts as they grow. Let most leeks mature to full size (90-105 days). If well cared for and fed, leeks will grow about 12 to 14 inches tall with mature white stalks up to 1 inch thick. Harvest full-grown leeks by digging them carefully with a garden fork.

Mature leeks will store well in the ground during winter months, and they also will keep well in the vegetable crisper of your refrigerator. Use in cooking like sweet onions, or as a tasty vegetable side dish. Leeks are wonderful in soups!

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