Okras is a warm-season vegetable that grows well in most Texas soils. A fair source of vitamin A, it can be eaten in many ways, including boiled, fried, and cooked in soups, gumbos, and casseroles.

Varieties

The best okra varieties to grow in Texas are Annie Oakley (Compact), Blondy (Compact), Cajun Delight, Clemson Spineless, Emerald, Green Best, Lee, Louisiana Green, Prelude (Compact), Long Pod Dwarf (Compact), Stewart’s Zeebest (Heirloom), Burgundy, and Velvet.

Site selection

For good yields, okra must grow in full sunlight in fertile, well-drained soil.

Soil preparation

Work the soil only when it is dry enough not to stick to garden tools. Spade or turn the soil as deeply as possible. Okra will grow best in soil that has been worked 8 to 10 inches deep.

Remove all rocks and trash from the soil, and then rake it soil smooth.

Planting

For the best yields, plant okra in the spring 2 to 3 weeks after all danger of frost has passed. For a good fall crop, plant at least 3 months before the first fall frost.

Plant the okra seeds about 1 inch deep and 2 inches apart in the row (Fig. 1). Space the rows at least 3 feet apart.

Figure 1. Plant okra seeds about 2 inches apart and 1 inch deep.
Scatter the fertilizer evenly between the rows. Mix it lightly with the soil. Water the plants after fertilizing.

**Insects**

Many insecticides are available at garden centers for homeowner use. Sevin is a synthetic insecticide; organic options include sulfur and Bt-based insecticides. Sulfur has also fungicidal properties and helps control many diseases.

Before using a pesticide, read the label and always follow cautions, warnings, and directions.

**Diseases**

Diseases on okra are most severe in cloudy, damp weather. Check the plants daily and treat them with an approved fungicide if diseases appear. Neem oil, sulfur, and other fungicides are available for use. Always follow label directions.

**Harvesting**

Okra plants will produce large flowers about 2 months after planting. The okra pods will be ready to pick 3 to 4 days later.

---

**Fertilizing**

Before planting, use 2 to 3 pounds of fertilizer such as 10-10-10 or 15-5-10 for each 100 square feet of garden area. Spread the fertilizer evenly over the area, and then mix it well into the top 3 to 4 inches of soil.

**Watering**

Okra will do fairly well under dry conditions. However, if you water the plants every 7 to 10 days, the yield will be higher. Sandy soils will need water more often than clay soils.

**Care during the season**

Cultivate around the okra plants to remove weeds and grass. To avoid damaging the okra roots, pull weeds close to the plants by hand.

After the first harvest, apply 1 cup of garden fertilizer for each 10 feet of row.
Harvest the pods when they are 3 to 4 inches long. If the okra gets too large, it will be tough and stringy. Pick the okra every 1 to 2 days or yields will decrease (Fig. 3).

Okra can be stored for 3 to 5 days in the refrigerator. Okra that is too mature can be dried, cured, and used in flower arrangements.

Figure 3. Harvest okra when it is about 3 to 4 inches long.

Okra seed is easily saved for next season by leaving some of the last pods on the plant until they get very large. Remove them and allow them to dry. The seeds will shell easily from the pods.

Other okra plant material such as leaves and stems can be put in a compost pile.

Acknowledgments
This publication was revised from earlier versions written by B. Dean McCraw, former Professor and Extension Horticulturist, and Sam Cotner, Professor Emeritus and former Extension Horticulturist.

Information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service is implied.