

## **Endive**

Endive, a succulent green crop, has outer green leaves that have a distinct, somewhat bitter taste; its inner, creamy white leaves have a buttery texture and more delicate flavor. Endive is easy to grow and matures in two to three months depending on the variety.

### **Varieties**

Endive comes in broad-leaved varieties (often called escarole or Batavian endive) and curly varieties. Three favorites are 'Florida Deep Heart,' 'Full-Heart Batavian,' and 'Green Curled.' The first two prefer warmer areas.

### **Planting**

For best taste, plant endive for cool-weather maturity (in the North, plant it in midsummer for a fall harvest). Prepare a loose, rich bed with lots of organic matter. For an early crop, start plants indoors or in a cold frame. Set seeds in the garden as soon as you can work the ground. Sow seeds in rows 1½ to 2 feet apart. Sow several times to extend the harvest.

### **Care**

As seedlings emerge, thin them to stand 6 inches apart. Plant thinned plants as transplants. To encourage leafiness, side-dress with high-nitrogen fertilizer every few weeks. Mulch plants to preserve soil moisture. Water frequently in dry weather to force quick growth. Blanching helps produce creamy white centers and prevents leaves from becoming tough and bitter, but causes the plants to lose vitamins. To blanch, pull dry leaves up into a loose head and secure. Or shade the plants with a board supported by bricks. After a rain, untie or expose the leaves just long enough to dry.

### **Harvest**

Slide a sharp knife under the blanched head and cut to harvest. Wash well and keep chilled in a crisper until needed.