

# OKRA

Ochro, Okro, Lady's Finger, Gumbo

*Abelmoschus esculentus*

Malvaceae

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## ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

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### Origin

Okra probably originated in North East Africa growing along rivers and bodies of water at 0 - 1000m elevation but due to the wide distribution of Okra around the world, its origin is uncertain.

### Uses

Okra is grown chiefly for the immature fruit, which are a popular vegetable in many countries. Young leaves can be used like spinach. Seeds are pressed for oil or roasted and used as a coffee substitute. The fiber from Okra canes can be used to make rope, paper, and cardboard.

### Common Names

- Haitian Creole
  - Okra
  - Dwèt Fanm
  - Kalalou
- Arabic
  - Bamia
- French
  - gombo

### Cultivation

- Elevation: 0-500 m (0-1640 ft)
- Rainfall: Fairly drought tolerant
- Soil Types: Tolerates a wide range, but prefers slightly acidic, well-drained sandy loams
- Temperature Range: 27-38° C (80-100° F)
- Day Length Sensitivity: Most cultivars are short day.
- Light: full sun; soak seeds for 24 hours before planting to speed germination.

Seeds are often planted into ridges or raised beds. Plant seeds 25 cm (10 in) apart in rows 65 cm (26 in) apart. The terminal bud can be removed to encourage lateral branching. Okra responds well to fertilizer or manure, but excessive nitrogen can delay pod maturity.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

Fruit pods are ready for eating at a length of 5-8 cm (2-3 in), 5-7 days after full blossom which occurs 60-180 days (depending on the variety) after seed sowing. Older fruits become fibrous and less acceptable for eating. Okra will flower and fruit over a long period (up to 6 months) if ripe fruits are harvested regularly --- as frequently as every other day. In temperate climates Okra plants may be cut back to a height of about 20 cm (6-8 in) after spring harvest for production of a fall crop. To save seed, allow pods to dry on the plant before harvesting.

### Pests and Diseases

Green and brown stinkbugs pierce buds and early pods causing deformed pods with wart like growth and shriveled seeds. Corn earworms chew holes in leaves. Examine plants frequently for corn earworms, stinkbugs, and cabbageworms. Okra can also be affected by powdery mildew, damping off, and Okra leaf curl virus (OLCV).

### Cooking and Nutrition

Okra is eaten fried, boiled, or cooked in stews. It can be canned, frozen, dried, or pickled. In some countries, dried pods are ground into powder for use in soups and sauces. Okra fruit is an excellent source of vitamin C and the young leaves are a good source of calcium.