Soil preparation

- Because only a few plants are needed, it is better to prepare only the planting spot. Each spot should have a diameter of 30 to 40 cm. The planting spots should be about 75 cm apart. Turn the soil using a garden fork to ensure proper aeration of soil and to work in plant rests and weeds into the soil.

- Brinjals do extremely well in soil with a high humus content.

- Apply one big handful of 2:3:2 (22) per m² and turn the top 20 cm of soil.

- The optimum pH (water) for brinjals is between 5.5 and 6.5.
Reproduction

- Brinjals reproduce by seed.

- Seedlings should first be established in trays with 128 holes and then transplanted, or can be sown in small pots or in a tomato box filled with compost-rich soil or seedling mix.

- The seeds often contain many empty shells, which are darker in colour, and which should be separated before planting.

- Seed should be sown in 1 cm drills and covered with soil.

- Start making seedlings from August to September in the North West Province and Gauteng.

- Germination will take place after 10 to 14 days and the seedlings can be transplanted into individual pots 5 weeks later.

- Keep seedlings moist but not wet. Use a watering can with fine spray.

- If seed were planted in a seedling tray, seedlings should be fertilised 10 days after germination, using a liquid fertiliser.

- Transplant into the garden when seedlings are 10 to 12 cm tall. Do not plant weak, damaged or long-stemmed seedlings. The soil should be very wet.

Cultivation

- Keep the planting spots clean by removing weeds.

- Irrigate early in the mornings (at least twice a week).

- Apply 20 to 30 g 2:3:2 fertiliser or liquid manure every month to each spot. Mulching will lower the soil temperature after planting. Apply every 7 to 8 weeks.

- Turn the soil lightly after fertiliser application and water thoroughly.
Harvesting

Harvest the fruit as soon as it reaches a diameter of 7 to 10 cm (about 3 months after transplanting).

In the case of good irrigation and fertilisation practices, 10 to 12 of them can be harvested from each plant.

Brinjal plants are delicate and care should be taken not to damage the plants during harvesting (the stems are quite brittle).

Cut the fruit with pruning scissors. Handle with care to prevent bruising. Keep in mind that the shelf life of the fruit is not very long.

Pests and diseases

Pests

• **Potato ladybirds**
  Larvae as well as adult beetles devour the leaves, leaving only a network of veins. Control by spraying with a registered pesticide according to prescription.

• **Cutworms**
  They attack the transplanted seedlings direct above the soil level during the night. Control by using a bait or plastic collars.

• **Eelworm/Nematodes**
  Nematodes are microscopically small and attack the roots of many types of vegetables. Roots of infected plants show knots and the plants are small with a low yield.

Diseases

Bacterial wilt can be prevented by following a crop rotation cycle, with brinjals or any other member of the Solanaceae family planting only once every fourth year.
Cultivars

*Black Beauty:* High yield with big fruit. Fruit can be deformed.

*Florida Highbush:* Fruit is pear shaped. Very high yield.

*Black Finger:* A thin, banana-shade hybrid (new).

Other cultivars are: Black Bell, Epic and Easter Egg.

Buying tips

- Brinjals must be firm and smooth with a shiny, unblemished skin.
- Choose small ones.
- Beware of the small prickles around the stalks. The sharper the prickles are, the fresher the brinjals.
- Allow 225 g of the fruit per person.

For further information contact:

North West Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment
Tel: 018 299 6595 • Fax: 018 297 7135

or

ARC-Roodeplaat Vegetable and Ornamental Plant Institute
Tel: 012 841 9611 • Fax 012 808 0844

or

Resource Centre of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Tel: 012 319 7140/7085
Recipes

Preparing brinjals

• Slice the brinjals, peeled or unpeeled as specified in the recipe.

• Sprinkle the slices with salt and put them into a colander. This will remove any bitterness and extract some of the water.

• Rinse and dry the slices before using.

• Brinjals may also be cooked in the skin. Prick the skin before boiling or roasting it in the oven.

Brinjal with tomato and onion sauce

1 brinjal

salt

oil

1 chopped onion

2 chopped tomatoes

1 chopped green pepper

breadcrumbs

• Peel brinjal, cut into cubes. Sprinkle with salt and leave for 30 minutes.

• Rinse and dry. Fry in warm oil, together with onion and pepper until soft and brown.

• Add chopped tomato and cook until tomato is saucy.

• Serve on rice, with lamb chops.
Fried brinjals

1 brinjal

1 egg (beaten)

breadcrumbs (optional)

oil

• Peel brinjal and cut into 1 cm slices.

• Rub salt into the slices. Leave for 2 hours.

• Rinse. Dip into egg and breadcrumbs.

• Fry in warm oil until soft and brown.