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To Grow a Great Garden, Start With Fantastic Seeds!

GROWING STEVIA FROM SEED

Growing Stevia Plants

Growing stevia is easy in well-drained beds or large containers, and the leaves can be dried for winter use like any other herb. Stevia grows best in warm conditions similar to those preferred by basil. Plants grown in warm climates will grow to 24 inches tall and wide. Where summers are cool, expect stevia plants to grow up to 16 inches. Grow three to five plants for a year's supply of dried stevia leaves.

Stevia can be started from seed indoors in late winter, but it's best to grow it from rooted cuttings. Germination of stevia seeds tends to be spotty, so keep seed-sown plants under bright lights until the weather warms in spring.

Choose a well-drained site, and set out the plants 2 feet apart after your last frost. Be sure to choose an accessible spot, because you will need to gather stems often. Where summers are extremely hot, stevia benefits from slight afternoon shade. Elsewhere, grow stevia in full sun.

Left unpruned, stevia will grow into a lanky, upright plant that produces tiny white flowers in late summer. To maximize leaf production, you must trim back the plants several times to induce branching, first when plants are about 8 inches tall, and again in early summer. You can use the leaves from the pinched-back stem tips, or root them in moist potting soil to increase your supply of stevia plants.