

aubergine.

Sow: Starting sowing indoors in March. Temperature must be at least 20°C for germination: use heated propagator.

Soil: Plenty of well-rotted manure, comfrey mulch.

Sun: Full sun in the warmest and most sheltered part of garden. Only small cultivars grow well outside. Grow larger fruits in a greenhouse.

Grow: Plant out when all danger of frost has passed and when first flowers appear. Feed with comfrey tea every three days and water plants well. Stake cordon varieties well.

Harvest: When fruits are plump and skin is still shiny. Do not leave too long or aubergines will taste very bitter.

Problems: Aphids and red spider mite can attack in the greenhouse. Outside, the biggest problem will be encouraging fruits to set and ripen in a cold summer. You may have to place the plant on a sunny windowsill towards the end of the summer.

For more advice on growing and cooking aubergines, visit the Stylish Gardening Blog: fennelandfern.co.uk