

How to Grow the Moringa

Moringa trees grow easily from seeds or cuttings. They grow quickly even in poor soil and bloom 8 months after planting. Moringa trees grow best in temperatures between 70°F and 95°F (21°C to 35°C). In the winter they should be covered with mulch or taken inside.

To grow from seed: Moringa seeds have no dormancy periods and can be planted as soon as they are mature.

In the ground: It is best to plant the seeds directly where the tree is intended to grow and not transplant the seedling. The young seedlings are fragile and often cannot survive transplanting. To plant seeds directly in the ground:



1. Choose an area with light and sandy soil, not heavy with clay or water-logged.
2. Dig holes 1 ft (30 cm) square and 1 ft deep. Back-fill the holes with loose soil. Compost or manure will help the tree grow better, even though Moringa trees can grow in poor soils.
3. Plant 3 to 5 seeds in each hole, 2 in. (5 cm) apart. Plant the seeds no deeper than three times the width of the seed (approximately ½ in. or 1.5 cm -- the size of one's thumbnail).
4. Keep the soil moist enough so that the top soil will not dry and choke the emerging saplings, but it should not be too wet or else the seeds can drown and rot.
5. When the saplings are four to six inches tall, keep the healthiest sapling in the ground and remove the rest.

Note: If the soil is heavy, dig a larger hole of up to 3 ft (90 cm) in diameter and 3 ft deep, and back fill with 1 part sand and 2 parts original soil. Added compost or manure will help.

In Grow Bags or Containers: When it is not possible to plant directly in the ground, use the following method



1. Fill seedling bags or containers with light soil mixture, i.e. 3 parts soil to 1 part sand.
 2. Plant two or three seeds in each bag, ¼ in. (0.5 cm) deep.
 3. Keep moist but not too wet. Germination will occur within two weeks.
 4. Remove extra seedlings, leaving one in each bag or container.
- Seedlings can be transplanted after four to six months when they are 2-3 ft (60-90 cm) high.

To grow from a cutting: After the trees have stopped producing fruits each year, branches need to be cut off so that fresh growth may take place. These branches are excellent for growing new trees.

1. Make a cutting at least 1" (2.5cm) in diameter and at least six feet (1.8m) long.
2. Dig a hole 3 ft. (1m) x 3 ft. (1m) and 3 ft. (1m) deep.



3. Place cutting in this hole and fill with a mixture of soil, sand and composted manure. Pack firmly around base of the cutting. Form a slight dome or cone shape, sloping down away from the cutting. It is desirable that water not touch the stem of the new tree.
4. Water generously, but do not drown the cutting in water.

Transplanting

The ground where the trees are to be planted should be light and sandy, not heavy with clay or water-logged. Dig a hole 1 ft (30 cm) square and 1 ft deep. Back fill with loose soil. Adding compost or manure will help the trees grow better.

1. Water the planting holes one day before transplanting the seedlings
 2. Plant seedlings in the late afternoon to avoid the hot sun the first day.
 3. Make a hole in the pit to accept all soil in the bag or container. Carefully cut open the sack or remove from container if is not a plant-able container and place the seedling in the planting hole. Be careful to keep the soil around the seedling's roots intact.
 4. Pack soil around the seedling base.
 5. Water only lightly for the first few days.
- If the seedlings fall over, tie them to a stick for support.

Harvest:

You can harvest the leaves, seed pods or seeds for consumption.

Moringa may be grown with spacing as you would provide for a small tree. For leaf production in intensive cultivation they can be planted close together and managed like a hedge.

1. Moringa is highly drought tolerant when established and requires little fertilization to survive. However, trees given adequate water and fertilization during the growing season will grow much faster and may produce better quality leaves and pods.
2. Under suitable conditions moringa grows very fast. If left untrimmed it may grow with a single trunk to a height of more than 40 feet. Don't let it become like a telephone pole! Especially for leaf production, moringa must be kept trimmed to encourage production of branches for easy harvesting within reach.
3. When the tree gets about three feet tall begin removal of the young terminal buds (great for salad greens) and more leaves can be harvested as the plant grows. After the first year of growth it may be cut down to a height of 1-2 feet above the ground to promote branching. Don't be concerned about harming the plant; it has developed large tuberous roots and will grow back rapidly.
4. In suitable growing areas the trees may begin to bloom when they are several months old. The flowers are edible and provide food for bees. Pollinated flowers will begin to produce pods that can be harvested while they are immature for consumption as a cooked vegetable. As they mature, they become tough and fibrous, unsuitable for consumption. You let them mature and dry out for seed harvest.