



## Stevia Planting Guide

### About Stevia

Stevia, or sweet leaf, a delightful herb renowned for its natural sweetness and used as an alternative to sugar, can be easily cultivated right in your own garden. Enjoy the natural sweetness of stevia without the addition of calories or artificial ingredients. This delightful herb has the potential to become a cherished addition to your culinary endeavors, enhancing both flavor and nutrition.

### When to Plant

Begin by sowing seeds indoors approximately six to eight weeks prior to the last anticipated frost. If direct sowing outdoors, wait until temperatures are 65°F.

### Where to Plant

Choose a planting site boasting a minimum of six hours of direct sunlight daily. Prioritize loose, well-draining soil to promote healthy root development.

### How to Plant

Utilize a well-draining potting mix specially formulated for seeds. Plant the seeds on the surface and gently press them in. Keep them at a temperature of 68 to 70°F. Ensure the soil is consistently moist but not overly soggy. Germination usually takes around 10 to 15 days.

Once the frost danger has passed, it's time to transplant the young seedlings outdoors. Select a sunlit spot, providing your stevia plants with at least six hours of full sun daily. Space the plants about 12 inches apart to offer them room to thrive. Opt for well-draining soil. Regular watering, particularly during hot and dry periods, is essential.

### Caring for Stevia

Deeply water your plants once per week, increasing frequency during arid spells.

To promote bushier growth and increased leaf production, pinch back the tips of your stevia plants two to three times. This practice should be initiated when the plants reach approximately six inches in height. Such trimming encourages branching, rendering your plants lush and bountiful.

Take heed if your gardening space is prone to windy conditions, as stevia plants are susceptible to wind damage. If you reside in a gusty area, select a sheltered planting location or consider providing a windbreak for your plants.

The key advice when it comes to harvesting your stevia plant is to pluck the leaves prior to the emergence of small white flowers. Once the plant redirects its energy toward flowering, the sweetness of the leaves diminishes.

As the chill of winter approaches, ensure your stevia plants remain protected. If daytime temperatures regularly plummet below 50°F, it's time to bring them indoors. Place the plants near a sun-drenched window to bask in ample light. During the winter months, ease up on watering, allowing the soil to dry slightly between waterings. Cut the plant back by half in midsummer and early fall. If you want to keep your plants over winter, leave at least six inches of plant intact to allow regrowth.