

Hops

By Michael Morris, The Flower Bin

The hop is a hardy, perennial plant that you can easily grow at home. Hops (*Humulus lupulus*) are used primarily as bittering and aroma agents in beer, though their fast growth and height make them good candidates for privacy and shade, as well. The keys to growing hops at home include a sunny location, well prepared soil and space for the hop vines to climb.

The ideal location in your garden would be full sun. Hops will grow in partial shade, but the quality of the plant will be reduced.

Good soil is a must in order to grow the best hops. Plan to incorporate 5" to 6" of compost, peat moss and aged manure into your native soil. Dig it in to a depth of 8" to 10". This will enrich your soil, allow it to drain better and help bring the pH down.

Hops are planted from rhizomes, basically a piece of root harvested from a mature plant. Rhizomes are available as "bare root" stock or potted in one gallon containers. Buying plants in containers gives you a head start in establishing your hop plants this season. The rhizomes should be planted about 2" deep and about 3' apart.

Hop plants can grow a foot a day and up to 15' or more. Some type of trellis or support is essential. If possible, plant hops along a fence, the side of the garage or an arbor. Or build a trellis with poles and garden twine. There are dozens of hops that will do well in your garden, including 'Cascade', 'Centennial' and 'Brewer's Gold'.

See your local, independent garden center to learn more about all the varieties you can plant and grow in your garden.