OKRA PRODUCTION GUIDE

(For Urban and Home Gardening)

Okra (*Hibiscus esculentus L.*) is a tall growing, warm season and annual vegetable crop. The young and tender fruits can be prepared as salad, boiled, broiled or fried and can be mixed in any meat and fish dishes. Okra is rich in Vitamin A, protein, calcium, fats, potassium, phosphorus, iron and carbohydrates.

Aside from its nutritional value, okra is used in traditional medicine for the treatment of stomach ulcer, inflammation of the lungs, colitis and sore throat.

Soil and Climatic Requirements

- Okra can tolerate a wide range of soil types but for better yield, plant in silty to sandy loam soils that are well-drained and with adequate organic matter. It grows well in long warm days (summer).

Seed Preparation and Planting

- Prepare a potting medium by mixing 1 part of garden soil, 1 part rice hull, and 1 part compost then fill pots with mixed media. Use pots measuring 9 inches in diameter with a height of 12 inches but the bigger the container the better. To attain uniform germination and good crop stand, soak the seeds overnight before planting. Plant okra seeds in slightly moist soil at a rate of 2 to 3 seeds per pot at 2 to 5 cm deep.

Water and Nutrient Management

- Water the plants every other day and every time you apply fertilizer.
- To boost plant vigor, apply weekly (spray or dench) organic probiotics preparations like IMO, Vermitea, FAA, OHN and FPJ during vegetative stage. During reproductive stage, apply FFJ, CalPhos or OHN to support flower and fruit development.
- For non-organic production, add 1 tbsp. of complete fertilizer (14-14-14) in the hole then cover it with a handful compost or soil prior to sowing. One month after sowing, apply 1 tbsp. of urea (46-0-0) per plant by burying it in a 1 inch deep hole 3-4 inches away from the stem.

Pest Management

- Cotton stainer and stink bug are the common insect pests of Okra, while Cescospora blight, powdery mildew, and fruit rot are the common diseases caused by fungi. For insects, you can use OHN and other botanical pesticide preparations such as hot pepper and lemon grass extracts, ginger extract, tomato extract and others. For diseases, you can use OHN and other botanical fungicides such as extracts of onion, ipil-ipil, kamantigi and takip kuhol.
- Aside from spraying botanical pesticides, growing aromatic crops like basil, allium, ginger, lemon grass and marigold can help repel insects. Likewise, growing cosmos, sunflower and zinnia attracts beneficial insects. Sanitation or removing diseased or damaged plant or its parts and burying them also helps.
- For non-organic production, you can use appropriate chemical pesticides available in the market.

Ratooning (optional)

- Ratooning is cutting of stem of old plants to induce branching and emergence of new shoots.
- After harvesting, cut the stems leaving about one foot from the ground. Shallow cultivate and apply fertilizer to induce shoot emergence.

Harvesting and Postharvest Activity

- Okra starts to flower 40 to 75 days after planting. Young and tender fruits can be harvested 4 to 6 days from flowering. Harvest only the fruits that measures 3 to 4 inches at 2 to 3 days interval. Harvest in the morning or late in the afternoon to maintain the freshness of the fruits.

Trivia:

Did you know that Okra can be eaten raw/fresh?

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