



Flaxseed

Linum usitatissimum

Flaxseed is very nutritious, with high levels of Omega-3 oils, lignans, and fiber. Also a source of oil for unheated foods. Very beneficial to chickens, who love to pick through the stalks after threshing to ensure nothing goes to waste. Flax is well-suited to our cool climate.

PLANTING

Prepare a fine seed bed. Soil fertility can be poor to moderate. Avoid too much nitrogen. Plant in April. We aim for 1 seed/inch with 12" between rows. Orient the rows to make weeding easy: planted in 3' wide beds, with a wheel hoe plant rows the long way, with a hand hoe, plant rows across the bed.

GROWING METHODS

MAINTENANCE

Flax does not require any water as it matures during our drought season. Several thorough weeding are necessary, as flax does not tolerate weeds and does not shade them out effectively.

HARVEST

Flax is mature in about 4 months. Planted in April, it should be ready to harvest in August. Wait until the seed-pods and stalks have turned brown and dry. To harvest, grab a bundle with one hand and cut with a scythe or serrated tool. Lay stalks the same direction as you harvest. Pull out any weeds ahead of time as the seeds may be hard to separate.

THRESHING

Lay bundles of flax on a tarp and shuffle dance on the pods. Throw stalks to chickens. Winnow in front of a steady fan on a windless day. A seed-cleaning screen is helpful as well.

PROCESSING

SEED SAVING/STORAGE

For seed saving, just put aside some of the seed for next year. To ensure the seed is dry, we usually leave ours in paper bags in a warm, dry location, for a month or two, then store in Rubbermaid bins.

COOKING TIPS

Flax seed can be ground in a coffee grinder and added to cereal, smoothies, and breads. Home-scale oil presses can be purchased to process small batches of flax seed.

YIELDS & LABOR

We spent 33 hours to grow 1,200 SF of flax, yielding 42 lbs (6.5 gallons). 2.5 hours planting, 12 hours weeding, 9 hours harvesting, 10 hours threshing.

BBGP RESEARCH

VARIETIES

Golden flax is more digestible than the brown variety. There are different variations on golden flax but we have tried several and so far found no difference.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION