

Rebel Rhizomes

Hop Rhizomes and the care and feeding of your new Hop Plant.

Rhizomes are basically Root Shoots that will grow into full hop plants. And grow they will. Some even reaching 20' if they have something to climb.

Growing hops in the garden is a fun and rewarding endeavor. Whether you are interested in hops for ornamental uses or for home-brewing this guide will help aid you in producing a successful crop year in and year out.

First, you will notice that your hop rhizomes are moist and packaged in a zip-lock bag. This is important for storage – I know many of you will not be planting your hops until April or even early May in some instances. The hops will keep fine if they are stored in the fridge ideally around 35 degrees or so. Remember to keep them moist and sealed in the bag so they do not dry out quickly.

I like to start mine in a pot with some good potting soil (straight up and down with about 2 inches of soil to cover). Once the baby vine has reached 10 to 12 inches long, I will transplant it out into the yard.

When you are ready to plant find a good, well-drained spot with full sun. This is important because to get maximum growth and yield the hop plant needs that ever-vital UV light. Once you find your location proceed to till the ground. It is often a good idea to plow the planting area – I know this may sound like a daunting task but really for the home gardener all you need to do is turn the soil over with your shovel. At this point you will want to break down the open soil with whatever implements you have available so that you don't have a bunch of clods. Lastly, dig a hole so that the rhizome will sit in it upright – with the white shoots pointed up to wards the surface of the ground. Now cover your rhizome or rhizomes with approx. 1-2 inches of fine soil/mulch..

Now that you are planted you will want to care for your hop as you would any other living thing...feed it, water it, and let mother-nature do the rest. A baby hop is not going to need as much water as an adult hop but don't be fooled into not remaining attentive. Keep the soil moist but do not drench or drown the plant – once again treat it like you would any other sort of young/baby plant.

Generally speaking it is important to offer the plant some nitrogen around the first week of June. It is at this point in the growing season that the plant really pulls a lot of N and is making a big push for the sky and throwing arms. You can often tell if a plant is nitrogen deficient by its color – you want to strive for a rich dark green color...anything less and your plant is not at its best.

As for diseases most of you will not face much pressure like commercial growers do. When you have a few hop plants in a non-hop growing region you are not going to have the disease activity found in yards with thousands of plants squeezed closed together in a valley with thousands of acres under trellis. In fact, most of you will likely be able to successfully grow your own 'organic' hops as a result. If you want more - check out www.usahops.org for helpful information on diseases and hop farming in general.

Lastly, I get a lot of questions about how to set-up a hop trellis system. Truth is there are a million and one ways to go about doing this when you are just doing a few plants – unlike commercial operations which are pretty standardized at this point. The key is to offer the plant adequate support, mature vines can get relatively heavy late in the season and you don't want to find yours on the ground. I think even just doing hops over an arbor is probably the easiest and very aesthetically appealing too. I have seen galvanized piping used, PVC...though make sure it is a heavier grade...and of course wood posts are very common. Try to get as much height as you can safely – remember commercial hop yards go up to 18 feet – this is where you will achieve maximum growth. As far as stringing your vines, most big box hardware stores carry Sisal Twine and hop vines seem to really like climbing it, but also any baling twine or even wire will work depending on what kind of scale you are working on.

Hope this offers some insight and remember feel free to shoot us any questions.

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