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Sowing instructions

Belgian endive

Growing chicory is very intense and complicated. First you have to grow long, slender, fleshy roots and on this roots you grow the chicory heads. This vegetable can be grown indoors all year round.

Sow thinly 13 mm deep in good, loose sowing soil in a deep container to provide enough room for the long roots. To ensure harvesting in summer you can start from February on. Keep moist and weed free. Germination takes 1-3 weeks.

Sow outdoors from May on (avoid frosts) in good, loose sowing soil. Sow thinly and cover the seeds with a very fine layer of sowing soil in raised beds in rows. Thin the seedlings after 1½ - 2 months to 10-15 cm apart. Keep moist and weed free.

Harvest the roots in October November. Now you can start to make the actual chicory. Don't damage the roots. Lay the roots with the leaves on them on the ground for about a week to let the nutrients from the leaves to steep in the roots. Cover them against rain, because the roots will rot when they get wet. After this week you must cut the leaves off, but don't remove the growing point. Cut the leaves about 2 cm above the roots. Remove the thin side roots and all the ground and mud of the roots.

Now you can start with making the chicory heads. It is possible to wait a maximum of 6 weeks with this. You should storage the roots in a dry, cool place with a temperature of about 5 °C.

The making of the chicory heads can be done in different ways:

Outdoors under cover of soil:

Clean the roots precisely. Loosen the soil and remove lumps and stones. Put some manure, sand or fertilizer in the soil to loosen the soil further. Dig a hole of about 20-30 cm deep. Make sure that the upper side of the roots is level with the upper side of the hole. Put the roots with a slight angle very closely together in the hole. The growing points must be about 2 cm underground. Sprinkle with a layer of about 2 cm loosened soil. Water the roots well and let the soil get between the roots. Cover the roots with a good layer of sowing soil. Don't overfertilize because this will let the heads rot. Vary with the layer of soil to spread the harvest. Cover for an early harvest with a layer of about 5-10 cm and for a late harvest with about 30 cm soil. Cover this layer of soil with a layer of hay or straw to provide some extra isolation. Cover this with some black plastic to prevent too much moisture from leaking in.

Indoors without soil cover:

Use buckets, boxes, pots or other containers. Use good sowing soil mixed with some sand. Put the precisely cleaned roots very closely together straight in the mixture. Cover with about 2 cm sowing soil and water very well and let the soil get between the roots. Put the container with the roots in a dark place or cover it with a lid or dark plastic. Keep the roots moist. Put the roots a couple of days on a temperature of about 10-15 °C to let the hair roots grow. After this period of time you can put them away on a temperature of about 15-20 °C on a dark place. You can harvest after about 3-5 weeks.

Open the hole or container to remove the chicory you need. Break the heads of the roots and let the heads dry well before using them. Cover the hole or container to let the other heads grow on.

Chicory can't be stored for long, because the heads will turn brown. Store them in the fridge for about 2-3 days. You have to cover the heads and let them grow in the dark to let them get there yellow-white colour. Water well specially during the hot summer months. Don't let the soil dry out. You can start by sowing indoors, but the delicate roots don't transplant well. Outdoor sowing is possible from May to August. Harvesting is possible from October to December.