



## Saline County Special Garden Project Calliope Eggplant

Calliope Eggplant bear small, white and purple variegated fruits.

Calliope is a beautiful, oval, hybrid Asian eggplant. Suitable for baby (2" long x 1 1/2" diameter) or mature (3"-4" long x 2 1/4" to 2 3/4" diameter).

Calliope Eggplant are a high yielding plant. The plants and calyxes are spineless, unlike many varieties of this type.

**Scientific Name:** Solanum melongena

**Growing and Planting Information:** Eggplants require fertile, well-drained soil with a pH range of 6.2 to 6.8. Sow seed in flats indoors during early spring, or 6-8 weeks prior to planting outdoors. Sow 4 seeds per inch at a depth of 1/4", and maintain soil temperature at 80-90 F degrees until emergence and 70 F degrees thereafter. Seeds will not germinated in cool soil. After true leaves from, thin to 2-3" apart in flat or transplant into 2-3" pots or plug trays. To harden plants, reduce water and temperature to about 60 F degrees for about a week before planting outside. Transplant outdoors late spring or early summer once the weather has settled. Eggplants are tender, and cold weather may weaken them. Use row covers for a boost in performance and as insect control. Remove when plants reach the covers or when blossoms first appear. Space transplants 18" apart in rows 30-36" apart, or 2 rows on plastic mulch, 18-25" between plants. It is important to be mindful of over-fertility. Too much nitrogen often results in large, bushy plants that produce only one small set of fruit.

**Insect Control:** Fabric row covers are the recommended method of control for Flea Beetles and Colorado Potato Beetles for new transplants. Once covers are removed, regularly check undersides of leaves and crush any orange egg masses of Colorado Potato Beetles. Holes in the leaves of eggplant often indicate damage from these troublesome pests. A fabric row cover applied at transplanting will help to exclude these pests. Spinosad (sold as SpinTor®) is a relatively new pesticide on the market that controls these two pests quite well. Because it is derived from a naturally-occurring soil microbe it is considered organic in nature and is not harmful to most beneficial insects. Aphids often gather on the underside of leaves, on stems and young buds. They can be dislodged from the plant by washing them off with a strong stream of water, or spraying them with insecticidal soap according to label directions.





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**Insect Control Continued:** Make sure to cover the underside of the leaves when applying pesticides. Since aphids can be a recurring problem check leaves regularly for signs of infestation. Mites are another common problem that often aren't noticed until considerable damage has been done. Mites are very small and thrive under hot, dry conditions. They damage plants by sucking on plant juices causing the leaves to discolor and yellow. When their population builds, a fine Webbing on the underside of the leaves is visible. Mites can be controlled by washing them off with water every day for about a week, or use insecticidal soap applied to the tops and undersides of leaves. Verticillium wilt is a disease that affects eggplants, as well as tomatoes, peppers and potatoes. The disease is caused by a soil-borne fungus that causes plants to wilt, turn yellow and eventually die. Interior sections of the stem will be brown and discolored. Prevent verticillium wilt by rotating eggplant, tomato, pepper and potato plants to different areas of the garden every year so you are not planting these crops in the same soil.

**Harvest:** Clip fruit stems with shears leaving 1-1 1/2" long stem. The calyx should be clean and free of brown edges and insect damage. Pick fruits of desired size regularly to encourage further production. Fruits should feel firm and have a glossy colored skin when harvested. Maturity can be judged by pressing lightly on the skin of the eggplant with one's finger. If the pressed spot springs back it is ripe; if the imprint remains the fruit is overripe and will tend to be seedy and somewhat bitter.

**Days to Maturity:** Small-fruited varieties and many of the newer hybrids are ready to harvest within 50 to 60 days of planting outdoors.

### **County Fair Exhibits:**

#### **County Only Special Garden Calliope Eggplant:**

**Enter in Division 775 - County Only Special Garden Project, 3. County Only Special Garden Project - Educational exhibit** based on what was learned from the project. Youth must be enrolled in the current Special Garden Project to exhibit. Present information on a poster 14" X 22" either vertical or horizontal arrangement or in a clear plastic report cover. The 4H member's name, age, full address, and county must be on the back of the poster or report cover.



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**County Only Special Garden Calliope Eggplant Exhibit:**

**Enter in Division 775 - County Only Special Garden Project, Class 4 . Fresh Cut Flowers or Harvested Vegetables** - 2 fruit on paper plate with index card with the following information:

Name: _____
Town: _____
Age: _____
Class Number: _____
Class Name: _____