

Eggplant, White—*Solanum ovigerum* Dun. and *Solanum melongena* var. *esculentum* (L.) Nees.¹

James M. Stephens²

There are two types of white eggplants commonly found in vegetable gardens around the state of Florida. The plant of the ornamental white eggplant (*S. ovigerum* Dun.) closely resembles the plant of ordinary culinary eggplant (*S. melongena* L.). *Melongena* includes edible varieties of eggplant having white fruit, such as ‘Albino’ and ‘White Beauty’.

Description

Ornamental white eggplant is a rather low-growing, branching plant. Stem and leafstalks are green, or very faintly tinged with purple, and bear a few white spines. Leaves are wavy at the edges. Flowers are lilac. The fruit are very white when immature, but turn yellow when ripe. In shape and size, they greatly resemble an ordinary hen’s egg. Larger fruiting and dwarf plant forms have been reported.

The ornamental plants are only occasionally grown in Florida home gardens because the fruits are inedible. The plants, with the snowy white “eggs” contrasting brilliantly with the green plant form, are very attractive. They are grown in Florida by ornamental plant growers and merchandised throughout the United States in pots.



Figure 1. Ornamental white eggplant
Credits: James M. Stephens

The edible ‘White Beauty’ eggplant (*S. melongena*) fruits are borne well off the ground on sturdy upright, 4-foot tall plants. Its foliage is a rich light green without the tinge of purple of the other strains. The fruits are larger than ‘Black Beauty’, a popular Florida variety of eggplant. Fruits reach a size of 4 pounds and are shaped round-oblong, similar to ‘Black Beauty’. Seed cavities are confined to the blossom-end half. Flavor is reputed to be deliciously mild when the vegetable is fried in batter, and without much trace of bitter taste. It should be harvested when solid and while the skin is still glossy.

1. This document is HS594, one of a series of the Horticultural Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date May 1994. Revised September 2015. Reviewed October 2018. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. James M. Stephens, professor emeritus, Horticultural Sciences Department; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county’s UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.

Culture

Growing both types of white eggplant is very similar to that for the more common purple kinds. All may be started from seed and are well adapted to container culture. Problems such as spider mites and wilts also affect white eggplant. Eggplants should be grown during the warm seasons.



Figure 2. Fruits of the 'White Beauty' eggplant
Credits: Blue Goose Inc.