



# QUINOA GROWING GUIDE

Native to the Andes Mountains, quinoa (pronounced “keen wah”) has been grown for over 5,000 years. The name, derived from “Quinoa,” means “Mother Grain” in the Inca language.

Quinoa is a cool season annual in the same botanical family as beets and spinach. A highly nutritious alternative to wheat, barley, and corn, it has become very popular in the United States in recent years.

Our Red Faro is highly productive and easy for home gardeners to grow, especially in Northern and mountain areas. Rainbow is our blend of beautiful colors, including red, orange, yellow, green, pink and burgundy. Seeds can be cooked, roasted, or ground into flour.

WHEN TO SOW	SUN / PART SHADE	SEED SPACING	ROW SPACING	PLANTING DEPTH	SPACING AFTER THINNING	DAYS TO GERMINATE	DAYS TO MATURITY
Spring, as soon as soil can be worked	Full Sun	1 inch	14-24 inches	½-1 inch	3-4 inches	2-4	90-110

## Soil and Fertilizing

It's best to have your soil tested before planting, to find out what nutrients and pH levels are needed for your plants. For a thorough soil test, visit an Agricultural Experiment Station in your area (scientific research center) or consult your local county extension agent (also known as a Land Grant University).

Quinoa does best in sandy, well-drained soil with an highly acidic pH of 4.8—a relic of its origins as a highland crop. Provide it with level, well-drained seed beds to keep it from becoming waterlogged. Small quinoa crops grow especially well in raised beds; this is a good option for avoiding the waterlogging issue.

## Planting

Plant the seeds directly in the ground or in your raised beds in the spring, as soon as the soil has thawed completely and can be worked. Cover the seeds with ½-1 inch of soil. The plants will germinate quickly, but they grow slowly before reaching their maximum height of 1½ to 6½ feet tall. The more room they have to branch out, the better. Keep up with weed control, since the plants have a long growing period and don't need the competition. Your quinoa plants may range in color from white to yellow, pink, red, purple, or black.

## Watering

Because it develops a deep tap-root and a highly branched root system, quinoa is somewhat drought resistant. However, it does need to be watered regularly until the seeds start to mature. At that point, stop watering and allow the plants to continue growing.

## Harvesting / Storage

Quinoa produces a large, sorghum-like seed head. To determine maturity, check to see that the seed can be just barely dented with a fingernail. If the plants have dried to a pale yellow or red or have dropped their leaves, the quinoa is ready for harvest. Cut off the seed heads and lay them out on a tarp or cloth to dry, then screen out the seeds.

### \*Mandatory Pre-Storage Step:

Quinoa seeds are covered with a bitter substance called saponin that you must remove before storing and especially before eating. To remove the saponin, soak the seeds in water for a while, pouring off the water and replacing it with fresh water several times, or put them in sacks or sturdy pillowcases and run them through a few washing machine cycles. Use water only, no detergent! Then lay them out to dry completely before storing.

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For soil testing or other questions specific to your growing climate, please contact your local county extension agent. Visit <http://www.almanac.com/content/cooperative-extension-services> to find the office nearest you.