



Growing and Using Hops

Grow, Harvest, Storage, Brewing

Selection

- Types of hops are limited from commercial sources
- Cascade is the easiest and most widely grown
- Generally harvests are small and inconsistent. Specialty hops that are expensive or in short supply are the best choices
- Aroma and flavoring hops, experimental hop varieties

Obtaining Hop Rhizomes

- Exchanges with other hop growers
- Buying Hop Rhizomes at online nurseries is the easiest and most reliable. Order rhizomes in fall and winter for late winter or spring shipment. [www. Thymegarden.com](http://www.Thymegarden.com) is my favorite.
- Some Brew supply stores will occasionally stock rhizomes in late winter to early spring but those can be prone to damage from improper storage.

The Rhizome

- Propagating can be done anytime after harvest. The rhizome or a section of it is dug up and a piece cut with a sharp, clean blade.



- The piece should have hairy roots and small bumps similar to potatoes.
- New growth from the plant can sometimes be rooted in water or with rooting hormone.

Planting

- Store the rhizome for planting until spring either wrapped in damp newspaper and loosely sealed in a plastic bag in fridge or wrapped in newspaper and stored in a well drained pot outdoors in a sheltered area.
- Roots are susceptible to drying out and rotting and can be damaged if their planting area is flooded

Planting

- Check the rhizome for rot or other damage and remove those parts.
- Dig a 6” hole if the soil is well drained and fertile or plant in the middle of a 12” mound of aged compost, planting soil or vegetable mix and cover the sides with mulch.
- Plant horizontally in a well drained container (5 gal+) or bucket with drainage holes using a soilless mix

Site & Sun

- Hops DO NOT tolerate wind
- Hop rhizomes DO NOT tolerate soggy, dry, sandy soil
- They will need sturdy support against a wall, fence, arbor or trellis
- Full sun is best, but 4 hours is the minimum or growth will be slow and harvest low
- DO NOT prune the ends of the vines where the cones form

Hops in my yard are grown in limited sun and allowed to hang down from supports





Hops grown in
containers and
on commercial
farms



Caring for Hop Vines

- Watering can be trial and error, but they do require more than other plants. Daily watering may be necessary depending on the weather
- Fertilize with compost, compost tea, other organic low nitrogen products, or commercial plant food for flowers

Supporting Hops

- Plan ahead for supporting structures because hops grow very quickly – up to a 12” per day
- Don’t let them trail on the ground or they will be damaged
- Sturdy structures, stakes, wire supports
- Hops can be loosely tied, but the new growth breaks easily

Pest & Disease

- Generally snails/slugs don't bother the plants because they are sticky and course.
- Pincher bugs, white flies, leaf hoppers and some small beetles can be a problem
- 1Tbsp mild dish soap to a gallon of water sprayed on plants when the temperature is under 90 degrees. Other mild organic soaps.
- Avoid spraying the cones to prevent damage

Pest & Disease

- Mildew and root rot can be a problem with fog and heavy rains or soggy soil
- Improve air circulation & drainage
- Remove damaged plant and pieces if necessary
- Neem or other MILD organic spray can be used on the leaves but will taint the pollen in the cones.

Harvest

- Hops are usually ready for harvest in the late summer through fall. Cut, don't pull when the pollen in their cones has formed, increased volume and matured to to a darker color than the first show of pollen. The cones will loosen up and appear dry and start to become papery. They will have a strong aroma.
- If you see pollen falling out of the cones the quality of your harvest will be reduced

Storage

- Keep different varieties separate and labeled
- Place harvested cones in paper bags or containers that won't retain moisture
- Dry as soon as possible in a dust, insect and moisture free environment.
- Vacuum seal or tightly wrap and freeze.
- DO NOT freeze fresh hops. They will turn to mush

Wet Hopping

- Fresh hops weigh 4-6 times more than dry hops and have more aroma and oils
- Only use fresh hops that are clean, pest, disease & chemical free.
- Fresh hops should be used within 48 hours of harvest to avoid spoilage
- Fresh hops can impart flavors that are lost through the drying process of harvested hops

Fresh Hop Brewing

- Seasonal beers with flavors that will hold up to the strong aroma & oil content of fresh hops
- Beers that will accentuate and feature the unique qualities of fresh hops
- Beers that may be able to disguise or complement a more grassy or green flavor
- Can be used during any part of the brewing process

Commercial Beers

- Two Brothers: Heavy Handed Ale
- Sierra Nevada: Northern Hemisphere IPA, Harvest IPA
- Russian River: Hoptime Harvest Ale, Happy Hops Ale
- Deschutes Brewery: Hop Trip



Beginning cone
formation,
maturing cones &
ripe cone ready for
harvest

