

CELERY

Varieties

Early: Sonora.

Mid: Command.

See your seed dealer for the most recent variety recommendations.

Seed and Seed-bed Treatment

Use seed treated with **Thiram** seed protectant. Hot-water seed treatment is also a safe-guard against early and late blight. To avoid damping-off, follow up with sprays of **Thiram 75WP** at 1.5 kg/1,000 L water. Apply to seed-bed at 3 to 5 day intervals as required.

Soil

Muck soils are ideal because of their high moisture-holding capacity. A pH of 5.2 – 6.5 is required for good production.

Seeding

Sow seed into a peat moss mix or sterilized soil 10 to 12 weeks before desired field planting date. Transplant to other flats when seedlings are 2.5 to 5 cm tall, and move to the field when seedlings are 10 to 12 cm tall and temperatures are above 13°C. Modules may also be utilized for producing transplants. Seedlings larger than 12 cm may show more bolting and be later maturing.

For the later crops, sow in open beds about May 1 and transplant to prepared fields in July. If the plants become too tall before field setting, they can be clipped back to a height of 12 to 15 cm, but untrimmed plants are preferred because their growth is less affected.

Transplanting

Hand transplanting is the usual practice, although machine transplanting should be considered as this method will ensure more uniform planting depth and plant growth.

Caution: *Celery plants will bolt if subjected to temperatures below 13°C for 10 or more days. Therefore, plants for the early crop should not be transplanted until the danger of a prolonged cool period is over.*

The application of floating mulches over early planted celery will reduce the risk of bolting. Only the varieties least prone to bolting should be planted at this time.

Florida 683 is not recommended for early plantings.

Growers producing their own plants, especially for early plantings, should keep greenhouse temperatures at 16 to 21°C. The plants can be hardened off by withholding water for the last 7 to 10 days before transplanting, but do not harden off celery plants by lowering temperatures.

Spacing

Four rows spaced 36 cm apart on raised beds with tractor wheels at 1.8 m centres with plants 30 cm apart within the row is the common practice, but three rows spaced 50 cm apart on raised beds with plants 20 cm apart within the row may be more beneficial for disease control. These spacings result in a final population of 77,500 plants/ha (31,000 plants/acre).

Fertilizer

A soil test is necessary to determine phosphate and potash requirements. See Chapter 3 for recommendations based on soil test results.

Seed-beds—Broadcast and incorporate 10-30-10 at 700 kg/ha (280 kg/acre) or its equivalent.

Fields—In spring, spread and incorporate manure if available. Allowing for the nitrogen (N) content in the manure, broadcast and incorporate 100 – 150 kg/ha (40 – 60 kg/acre) of nitrogen and all of the required phosphate and potash before transplanting. Three weeks later, side-dress with 30 – 60 kg/ha (12 – 24 kg/acre) of nitrogen. Apply another side-dress if needed.

Weed Control

See Table 7.13. See also the fold-out chart inside the back cover.