Characteristics:
Eggplant is a warm-weather plant. The optimum temperature for germination is 24-29°C (seedlings should emerge in 6-8 days) and 22-30°C for growth and fruit development. Full sun is a must. Eggplant is adaptable to different kinds of soil conditions. Deep, fertile and well-drained sandy loam or silt loam soils are desirable. Eggplant cannot tolerate frost and the growth of young plants is retarded when the temperature is below 16°C. Eggplant can tolerate drought and excessive rainfall, but growth slows when temperatures exceed 35°C.

Cultivation instructions:
Soak eggplant seeds in warm water (50-60°C) for 30 minutes before sowing. Sow seeds in shaded seedbeds and place on benches (avoid touching the ground to prevent infection by soil-borne diseases and vulnerability to flooding). Use 50-60 mesh netting to enclose the nursery, to exclude whiteflies, eggplant fruit and shoot borer, and other insect pests. The seedlings should be thoroughly watered 12-14 hours before transplanting. Transplant the disease-free and strong seedlings with 3-4 true leaves (about 4-6 weeks after sowing) into raised beds prepared with a mixture of compost and NPK fertilizers. Distance between plants should be 50-60 cm. One month after transplanting, a bamboo stake (100-120 cm) should be placed near each plant to support the plant from fruit load. Pruning is recommended to produce bright-colored, high quality fruit. Maintain 2-3 branches per plant. Remove lateral branches periodically. Remove older leaves from the lower portions of plants to allow for more air circulation and light penetration within the canopy. Eggplant is a long-duration crop and applying NPK fertilizer during the growth (3 and 6 weeks after transplanting) and harvesting periods (every 2-3 weeks) is needed. Irrigation is essential in areas with little rain during the growing and fruiting stages. Avoid using land that was previously planted with solanaceous crops such as potato, tomato, pepper, etc. From flowering to market-fruit size takes about 3-4 weeks. Firm and heavy fruits should be harvested while they are still glossy with a desirable color.

Nutrition and cooking:
Eggplant is low in saturated fat and cholesterol. It is a good source of vitamins C and K, B1, B3, B5, B6, potassium, manganese and dietary fiber. Young fruits can be boiled, stewed, roasted, baked, grilled, deep-fried, stuffed, pickled or added to soups and curries.