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BASIC HOPS GROWING INSTRUCTIONS

Basic Hop Rhizome Instructions and Care:

Prepare the hop yard: You may already know exactly where your new hops are going to go, if so, look-up and make sure you have 10-20' of vertical or trainable climb space. If not, find an area that is full of sun, low on wind and has plenty of climbing space. You may also incorporate a trellis system.

Select where you are going to plant the rhizome and prepare the soil. Be sure it is loose and porous- compact clay styles oil will result in standing water and eventually root rot and plant death. If drainage is a concern build a hop hill with soil and gravel/sand mixed in to make a looser bed. If you can grow vegetables or flowers fairly well in your soil then you should have no problem growing hops. For the precision growers the rhizomes require a soil pH of 5.5-8.0 and a general nutrient regiment where the potassium and phosphorus are roughly double the nitrogen content the trace mineral boron is also beneficial.

When to plant:

With a properly mulched hop hill, the rhizomes can withstand 20 degrees F freezes. It is better to plant too early than too late, so as soon as you can till the ground get them in it. If you need to await the spring thaw, store the rhizomes in the refrigerator to keep it moist. Some lightly plant the rhizome in a pot and store in a root cellar and replant once the soil becomes workable.

Plant the Rhizome:

Dig a trench 4" deep and roughly the length of the rhizome you are planting. Look for any whitish buds on the rhizome and position them skyward. If no buds are present look for roots and place them ground ward. The rhizome should be planted horizontally, not vertically. Cover and pack by hand with soil. Lightly water and introduce mulch if desired. Like varieties can be planted 2 -3' apart. Separate unlike varieties by 10' or more.

Grow the hops:

Watch for growth and monitor the soil - if it is dry and you are not getting much rain, water the hill. You can over do it so occasional monitoring will help keep the water needs in check. Occasional nutrient feeding can help increase your yield.

As the shoots emerge, 5 -6 per rhizome are probable. In order to reduce crowding, cut back the weaker shoots in favor of the strongest 2 -3. Crowded vines promote infestation and shade damage. Be sure to water early in the day so the leaves have a chance to dry out, mildew

needs moisture and darkness to form. Also be sure the vines do not get tangled, this promotes crowding.

Monitor the Hops:

Keep an eye on the hops as they grow, aphids and powdery mildew are the most common hazards in the garden. Powdery mildew forms on the underside of the leaves in a white powdery substance. Trim the affected leaves off and completely dispose of them outside your yard (in the trash). There are several natural pest control sprays for aphids. Problems that are caught early are easier to correct. Train the growing shoots as well, in the Northern Hemisphere they will grow clockwise vertically, give them something to climb and wrap them around accordingly

Harvest Time:

Once you see cones appearing you can start the harvest. Flowering occurs over roughly a 4 month period, so periodic harvesting of mature cones during this time will spread out the harvest work. Select a random cone and cut it vertically. A ripe cone will have a yellow dust (lupulin!) in the center and should be pungently hoppy. Collect the cones and Prepare them for storage. You can dry them in the sun or through other more elaborate techniques including building your own hop dryer or food dehydrators can come in handy too. Cones must be kept cool and dry – some store them in zip lock bags in the freezer. Find a way to keep out light, oxygen and moisture and you are in business!

Brewing with Homegrown Hops:

Due to the unpredictable alpha acid content, most home grown hops are used as flavor, aroma or dry hop additions. Use a store bought hop with a determined alpha acid unit if you want to have a precise control over your IBU level - or just brew with it based on the loose alpha acid percentage provided. There are even recipes that incorporate freshly picked, "wet" hops. Have fun!

More info on growing hops can be found at: <http://www.freshops.com/gardening.html>