Growing Organic Celery
for home and market gardens

By Trish Mumme
Garden Patch Produce CSA
Serving Central Ohio customers
for 17 seasons
Every Garden Needs Celery!

- Delicious!
- Useful in so many dishes – raw or cooked, stalks and leaves!
- A must for soups.
- Use fresh or chop and freeze (no blanching necessary).
- BUT BEWARE OF BUYING IT!!!!....
CELERY: Number ONE on “The Dirty Dozen” for highest pesticide residues of commercial produce items

- Celery has no protective skin, which makes it almost impossible to wash off the chemicals that are used on conventional crops.

- A perennial entrant on the Dirty Dozen list, 64 pesticides detected in residue on this veggie make celery rank No. 1 in the 2010 analysis, up from No. 4 in 2009.

Read more: http://www.thedailygreen.com/healthy-eating/eat-safe/Dirty-Dozen-Foods#ixzz1AmQ0QuMw
Celery: Often used, seldom grown. Rarely seen at farmers markets.

- Has a reputation for being hard to grow.
- Nonsense!
- MUCH easier to grow than many popular garden crops: melons, cucumbers, arugula
- HAS ALMOST* NO PEST PROBLEMS!

- *Black swallowtail caterpillars do like it
  But they don’t eat much, and turn into such beautiful butterflies! Leave them alone.
Celery: Often used, seldom grown. Rarely seen at farmers markets.

- Needs an early start.
- Needs regular water (even when you think it doesn’t)
- Benefits from mulching.
- Good for succession planting.
- Harvest from July through November!
- Grows best planted in a block in a raised bed. (To encourage upright growth.)
Starting Celery

Seed Selection:
- VENTURA, VENTURA, VENTURA!
- (Tango, Conquistador, Utah will do if you can’t find Ventura)

Stratify seed?
- Freeze seed 2 weeks before planting. May speed germination.

Potting Soil:
- See Garden Patch Potting Soil Recipe
How I Start Celery:

- I seed only once, in early March.
- In ONE flat with center rib, filled with 2 or 3 inches of potting soil.
- Sprinkle seeds on top in two thick rows on each side of the flat.
- Cover with 1/8 inch of fine potting soil or peat moss.
- Keep on hot box under lights for a week or two. Be patient. (Umbellifers are slow germinators!)
- When you see sprouting, remove from heat, put under lights, about 60 degrees.
- I remove to greenhouse or cold frame when I can keep it above freezing.
- May germinate in 2 stages. That’s fine! Stratify for more uniform germination?
By May……

- You have one Gawdawful packed flat of celery plants.
- This flat will plant two 50 foot raised beds, two foot wide planting surface, 4 plants across.
- Enough celery for 25 CSA customers and more from July-October!
- This flat is worth several hundred dollars!!!
Separating Celery

- Celery plants are TOUGH!!
- Tear out each individual plant, grasping at soil line.
- If it has any root at all, it will do fine!
- Take care not to bury center, where new grown comes, when you transplant to individual cells!!

Pull out a few plants to separate into flats, every few weeks from early May through early August.
Separated Celery

- Breathing room!
- In 3 weeks, roots will nearly fill cells.
- They are ready to go in the garden!
Planting in a Raised Bed:

- Irrigation line down middle of 2 foot planting surface
- Two plants on either side of line
- Rows about 8 inches apart.
- AGAIN: Make sure center of plant is not buried (by soil or mulch) Keep original soil line!
- 6 inch strips of newspaper or brown paper tucked in bed in between rows.
- Top with mulch of chopped leaves or straw. (Straw best for keeping plants upright!)
After a few weeks...

- They start to look like celery!
- Keep them watered!
- Pull weeds if needed.
- Monitor for rabbit or GROUNDHOG damage
- One Groundhog can ruin hundreds of dollars of celery in 2 days.
- Treat Groundhogs with acute lead poisoning (22 caliber) or bombs to burrows.
Celery Plants in late June

- First planting of celery in foreground.
- Note thin plants of 2nd planting, mulched with straw, on extreme left.
- First celery (planted mid May) will be ready in early July
- 2nd crop will ripen in mid August.
Two Succession Plantings
Troubleshooting

- Most celery problems due to irregular watering.
- Roots are shallow. Watering a little twice a week better than once a week well.
- Water more in hot spells.
- Consider covering row with shade cloth strips clothes-pinned onto wire hoops for extended hot spells. (Also good for transplanting to garden in sunny weather.)
My how they’ve grown!

By mid to late July, some stalks will be ready to pick.
Get your Knife!
June and July—Same two rows
Harvest Time
Going to Market

- Strip some outer, skinny or yellow stalks if ugly.
- Cut off root evenly.
- Rubber band.
- Set in 3 inches of water.
- Take to market next morning!
- Sell!
Going to Market

- Don’t forget to say! **YOUR Celery is**
- PESTICIDE FREE!
- Easy to chop and freeze!
- Has more flavor than grocery store celery
- Use the leaves too!
- Customers will be back for more!
Repeat as needed!
The Last Crop: Thanksgiving Market

- Separate in late July, early August
- Transplant into garden bed in late August, early September.
- Cover with row cover in October.
- Line row on either side with black plastic bags of fall leaves for insulation.
- Top with old windows for best protection from freezes by late October. Blankets will do.

**PROBLEM:** Field mice love celery roots. Put traps in these enclosures?
Growing Celery: Fun, Healthy, Delicious!
Growing Celery:

YOU CAN SAY YOU DID IT!