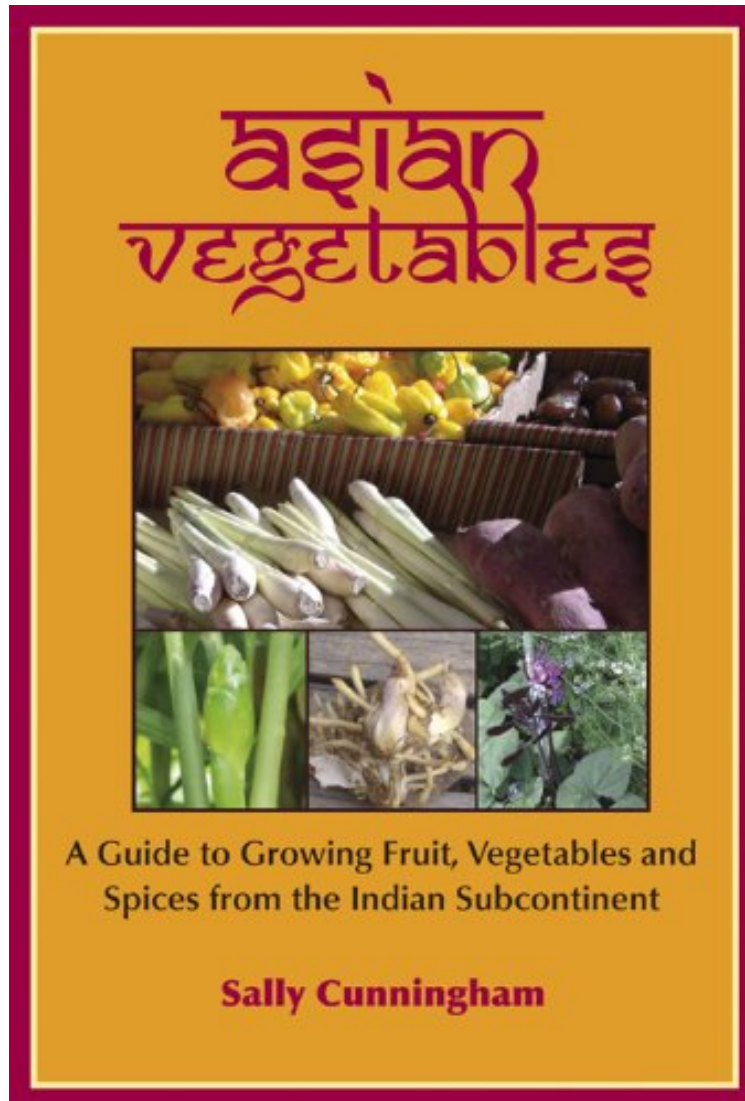


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Asian Vegetables: A Guide to Growing Fruit, Vegetables and Spices from the Indian Subcontinent

Sally Cunningham

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Sally Cunningham : Asian Vegetables: A Guide to Growing Fruit, Vegetables and Spices from the Indian Subcontinent before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Asian Vegetables: A Guide to Growing Fruit, Vegetables and Spices from the Indian Subcontinent:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Guide to growing INDIAN vegetables; OK but much room for

improvementBy mariolinaI vacillated between 3 and 4 stars for this book because, despite the Sally Cunningham's expertise, diligent research, and first-hand experience in growing these vegetables, the book has some serious shortcomings that could have been easily avoided if her publisher Eco-Logic Books had done a better job of shaping, editing, packaging, and marketing this book. It's truly a shame for the author because she obviously devoted a great amount of effort in writing this book and is unlikely to earn the royalties she deserves, and it's a shame for her potential audience who are unlikely to ever stumble across it, not even by accident. I hope that the publisher will consider a new edition to address the book's many problems. Let's start with the title, Asian Vegetables, which is a true misnomer. As the subtitle explains, this book is intended to be "A Guide to Growing Fruit, Vegetables, and Spices from the Indian Subcontinent", not about growing vegetables from all of Asia. In Great Britain, "Asian" (according to Wikipedia) "refers specifically to people of South Asian ancestry (Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis, and Sri Lankans)", but in the United States and in much of the rest of the world, "Asian" by itself means "East Asian" (Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, etc.). Americans, including Americans born in India or who are of Indian descent, who are interested in growing vegetables from the Indian subcontinent are not likely to use "Asian" as a search keyword. Readers who are familiar with the Devanagari script used to write Hindi and several other Indian languages might be tipped off that this book is about vegetables from the Indian subcontinent by the use of the Devanagari-like font (looks like Samarkan) on the book cover, but this hint is too esoteric for most potential readers and is of no use when searching by keyword. I imagine that the publisher used "Asian" to avoid the term "Indian", which might annoy Pakistanis and other non-Indian groups from the Indian subcontinent, but the decision came at the cost of at least 90% of its potential audience. My second criticism is that the contents of the book are written for a British audience, rather than for an international one. To appeal to the widest popular audience, the author should have made a point of including common English and Hindi names for the vegetables, not just the names used in the UK. For example, the terms "brinjal" and even "aubergine" will be unfamiliar to many Americans, who know that vegetable as "eggplant". "Brinjal", which is derived from a Portuguese word, is used in India among some English-speaking Indians, but the Hindi word "baigan" or "baingan", the most widely used name in India, is not used in the book. Granted, with 1652 languages spoken in India and 22 official languages, India's linguistic situation is extraordinarily complicated, but the book should provide at least one native Indian name for each vegetable, preferably in Hindi, which is the most commonly spoken Indian language by far. On the same topic, some of the native Indian names appear to be incorrect or misspelled, although I could be wrong because I'm only a beginning Hindi speaker. Perhaps the author transcribed the vegetable names as she heard them from the vegetable vendors, without looking them up. Similarly, just as the English terminology is geared to a British audience, the cultivation notes are helpful for people living outside of the UK. Because the growing season in the UK is short, cool, and rainy, many of the plants that are described in this book would grow in there only in greenhouses. Many of these vegetables could be grown successfully in the field or garden in North America, Australia, or Africa, where there are large numbers of Indian migrants and people of Indian descent who would be interested in growing these plants but who would benefit from more pertinent cultivation details. Even though this is not a cookbook, including recipes for some of the more exotic vegetables, such as bitter melon, would have been a smart marketing move. By not including any recipes, the author has pretty much excluded from her audience gardeners who are unfamiliar with these vegetables but who are enthusiastic about trying new vegetables, either out of curiosity or because of their health benefits. Few people are likely to attempt to grow unusual vegetables, especially ones with unappetizing names like bitter melon, unless they have some idea of how to prepare them. Finally, the photos are poor quality and, in some photos, the vegetables pictured look past their prime. The book contains numerous typos ("pices" for "spices"), misspellings, and outright mistakes. The chart of names at the end of the book is incomplete and rife with errors. The list of suppliers is limited almost exclusively to the UK, with only a couple located in France and Canada. (Many of these vegetables and plants are easy to grow just by using seeds sold as spices, such as fenugreek seeds [methi] or by using seeds from vegetables sold in the market, but there's no information about that.) Last but not least, there's no index.

2 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A fine pairing of color photos and growing specifics perfect for home gardeners across the country. By Midwest Book Review

ASIAN VEGETABLES: A GUIDE TO GROWING FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND SPICES FROM THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT provides a fine survey to over 40 varieties of fruit, vegetables and spices that are grown on the Indian subcontinent, offering tips on how to buy them and how to grow them. Most can be grown nearly anywhere: gardeners and cooks receive a fine pairing of color photos and growing specifics perfect for home gardeners across the country.

Asian Vegetables brings together a wealth of information on over 40 varieties of fruit, vegetables and spices that are grown on the Indian subcontinent and form a distinctive part of the unique cuisine in that part of the world. Each plant comes together with details of what to look for when buying, the different varieties available, their nutritional value, comprehensive cultivation instructions, useful colour photographs and much more. Most can be grown almost anywhere, though some will grow best and thrive in the warmer, wetter parts of this country. The author Sally Cunningham has personally researched, grown, cooked and eaten every plant mentioned in this book. With this unique

guide both the experienced gardener and those new to growing will bring variety and a fresh, new dimension to the food on their plates and the plants in their garden.

"A superb and useful book."--Home Farmer
About the Author
Sally Cunningham, has been a professional organic gardener for nearly 30 years. She has been Deputy Head Gardener at the prestigious Ryton Organic Gardens and worked on a variety of projects from setting up Community Allotments to gardener at Belgrave Hall, a garden founded in 1500. Her work with the Plantcultures project (run jointly by Kew Botanical Gardens and Leicester Museums) gave her an opportunity to fulfil a lifelong ambition. Since moving to Leicester in the early 80s she has been intrigued by the exciting mixture of food cultures of that city. What started out as fascination with the huge variety of fresh produce on sale in the Asian shops and market stalls, has turned into her life's work, researching, writing about, cooking and growing these delicious vegetables, fruits and spices.