

How I grow and harvest organic Chia seeds

by [LongTimeMother](#)
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Why I grow chia

Chia is easy to grow, beautiful to look at, and offers lots of nutritional value. It deserves a place in any garden.

I have been growing chia organically for the past ten years, and in that time I have fine-tuned growing and harvesting techniques. Chia is one of the easiest plants to grow, and one of the healthiest.

Chia seeds are a very high source of linolenic acid (LNA) and linoleic acid (LA). Both these essential fatty acids attract oxygen and help cell membranes to be flexible and fluid, plus strengthen our immune system to help protect our bodies from viruses, bacteria and allergies.

Most people's diets are dangerously low in essential fatty acids, which results in tired muscles, fatigue and a range of health problems. We need to eat EFAs daily because the human body cannot manufacture them. If your diet includes a lot of refined oils and processed foods, you are most at risk.

EFAs, such as those found in chia, can assist with weight loss and removal of toxins from the body.

Traditionally chia has been used to calm nerves and strengthen the memory, but the most high-profile value of chia comes from the seed's ability to produce high energy. University research has revealed that one tablespoon of chia seed could reasonably be expected to sustain a person working hard enough to work up a sweat, for 24 hours.

Enzymes in chia help with digestion of other foods.

How to use Chia seeds and leaves

Chia is very convenient and versatile. I chew chia seeds, releasing their nutty taste, and use them as a snack food on a busy day. They swell a little as they absorb

Grow your own organic chia



Dried chia flower heads, ready for seed separation. My chia is always organic.
Source: Photo by LongTimeMother, author



Chia flowers look lovely in the garden.
Source: Photo by LongTimeMother

saliva, making them soft and ready for the journey to my stomach. Chia seeds have appetite suppressant qualities and are useful for dieters.

Soaking the seeds first in water or a fresh juice makes them even easier for your body to digest. Wait long enough for the seeds to swell.

Sprouting chia seeds increases their vitamin content and makes them even more nutritious. Just like alfalfa sprouts and mung bean sprouts, chia sprouts are a great addition to a salad.

The leaves, fresh or dried, make a relaxing and therapeutic tea. Chia tea has traditionally been used for fevers and pain relief, to relieve arthritis and respiratory problems, as a gargle for mouth ulcers and sore throats, and to reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

If you want to sweeten your chia tea, use a healthy sweetener like honey or stevia.

When baking my own bread, I sometimes toss a handful of chia seeds in the mix. This is not the healthiest way to eat chia because essential fatty acids are at their best when uncooked, but it makes the bread a little lighter and provides a nice change.

Extra chia leaves I feed to my hens, pigs or other animals. The animals would eat the seeds too, but I keep most of the seeds for human consumption and planting next year. If you don't have animals, use the chia leaves as mulch.

How to grow organic Chia

Chia seeds are tiny. You don't need to dig a hole to bury them. Lightly ruffle your weed-free garden area with a rake or, if you only have a few seeds and are spacing them carefully, loosen the earth with your fingers. Sprinkle a few seeds over the soil, and rub gently to cover them.

Water the seeds daily, and within about



How tall does your chia grow? My organic chia plants grow as tall as an adult.
Source: Photo by LongTimeMother



Chia leaves. Pick them and dry them to make tea.
Source: Photo by LongTimeMother



Chia seeds germinated in a pot.
Source: Photo by LongTimeMother

a week you can expect to see chia sprouts taking form.

When planting chia seeds directly into the garden, I create a carpet of chia and then thin the plants as they grow. Some are fed to the hens, some are used as mulch, and some are harvested while young to dry the leaves for chia tea.

Chia seeds germinate successfully in pots. If you want to start your chia plants indoors or close to your garden tap, sprinkle them lightly in your pot and water regularly. When they are about three inches tall, they are ready for transplanting.

Remember to mulch your chia plants and water them regularly. They thrive in an organic garden and don't like competing with weeds.

Chia grows extremely well in gardens weeded with my 'pull and drop' weeding technique. Many readers will be familiar with my approach to preparing and weeding my organic garden. Those who aren't, can learn about it here ...

- [Cheap Organic Gardening Tips](#)

The cheapest way of establishing any garden is to work with the tools, soils and seeds that you already have available. How to work with nature and reap nature's rewards, even if you don't have your own garden yet.

Harvesting Chia - so easy a child can do it!

Harvesting chia, in our home, is great fun for children.

Because I insist on growing everything organically, including chia, there are no pesticides or chemicals to fear at harvest time. Together the children and I pick the flower heads, put them in paper bags, left open so the air can circulate, and wait for them to dry.

Children love to crush the flower heads and loosen the seeds. Chia is one of those lovely plants that don't have sharp or prickly pieces when harvesting. Even when dry, they are still relatively soft on your hands. I set the children up with their own work area and they can busy themselves for a full day.

Meanwhile, I work separately. The size

Seeds from any chia pack should grow. Try to buy organic.



HealthWorks Pesticide and Chemical Free Chia Seeds 2 Pounds

[Buy Now](#)

Children and Chia



My children conduct science experiments with chia. They explore different ways to separate the seed.

Source: Photo by LongTimeMother

of your harvest will determine how many days are required to separate the seeds, but I store dried chia flower heads in a large calico bag until I have time for my next seed separating session.

Successful collection of chia seeds without waste has a lot to do with timing. When growing chia at home, it is possible to pick flower heads as and when ready, instead of the mass harvesting conducted in a commercial growing environment.

If you wait until the flower head browns, you risk losing seed. Begin harvesting your chia as soon as most of the petals have fallen. Give them time to dry in paper bags or on a drying rack, but prepare for at least some of the chia seeds to break free in the process. Do not hang the plants upside down in your shed.



Some techniques for seed separation take longer than others. :)
Source: Photo by LongTimeMother



The fastest and easiest way to crush the dried flower heads and extract the chia seeds is to rub with a flat hand.
Source: Photo by LongTimeMother



Once the chia flower head is rolled and crushed, pour the seeds and debris into a sifter.
Source: Photo by LongTimeMother

Other ways to harvest your chia

If you turn your back as your chia matures and you find it is really too late

Ready for harvest

to pick your flower heads without losing too many seeds, there's a more effective way of collecting the seeds than thrashing the plant.

Simply hold a bag beneath the flower head and shake one flower head at a time. This will be a slow and arduous process if you are growing a lot of chia plants, but the seeds will fall freely.

There is no need to slap the plant like the people in the 'gathering chia' video do. I don't actually see a chia plant in their garden, but perhaps it is a different variety to the one most of us are familiar with.

If I put as much effort as they did into collecting chia seed, I would want to see a much bigger bag of chia seeds than they exhibit at the end. :)
Collecting chia seeds in my organic garden is much more pleasant and a lot less work.

If your seed heads are very dry and the seed is difficult to catch, try cutting the whole head off with scissors. The falling seeds will land in the bag. When you get back to your kitchen, separating the remaining seeds may be as simple as shaking, instead of rolling, the individual seed heads.

In my experience, the simplest, easiest and most effective way to harvest your chia is to wait for most of the flowers to fall, and pick when there is only a small number of petals remaining. Nature will help the seeds dry and become firm if you allow plenty of fresh air to circulate around your plants.

Growing your own organic chia is easy. Toss some chia seeds in your garden in spring time, and enjoy the benefits of home grown, organic chia.

Chia seed update ...



The easiest way to harvest chia is to pick it.
Source: Photo by LongTimeMother



Picked at the right time and allowed to dry, the chia seeds are easy to separate and collect.
Source: Photo by LongTimeMother, author



Here is a photo of one of the packets of chia seeds I bought years ago and planted. Since then, I've been saving seed to use from one year to the next. I hope this pic helps readers who are having trouble obtaining appropriate seeds. :)
 Source: Photo by LongTimeMother

Same chia brand

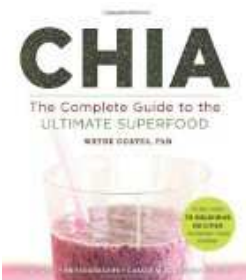


Renew Life Ultimate Chia life Nutritional Supplement Jar, 16 Ounce

I found chia seeds by the same company on amazon, and here is a link to the page. All their feedback reports are excellent. :)

[Buy Now](#)

Want to know more about chia?



Chia: The Complete Guide to the Ultimate Superfood (Superfood Series)

Once you start growing and harvesting your own chia, I suspect you'll be eager to use the seeds in as many ways possible. I have not read this book, but its reviews are very good. It gives recipes and other ways to use your chia.

[Buy Now](#)

World shortage of chia!

Did you read in the news that there is a world shortage of chia? In August 2012 and again in March 2013, chia seeds were hard to obtain. Undoubtedly as word spreads of chia's healthy properties, demand for seeds will continue to increase.

Nine months ago all chia wholesale companies in Europe were sold out.

All it takes is one bad season in a major chia growing area for seeds to become difficult to buy and - just as importantly - more expensive. To my way of thinking, that's even more reason to plant and harvest your own chia.

Here's an interesting link that gives an insight into what is happening with chia seed supplies. ...

- <http://www.linkedin.com/groups/World-Wide-shortage-hits-Chia-4152919.S.108060772>

If you like growing and harvesting chia

I have never heard of a nursery that sells chia seedlings the way one can buy parsley, thyme and oregano. Surely the time must be coming, but chia is certainly not 'mainstream' yet.

By seeking out and reading this page, I am guessing you share my interest in growing healthy, organic produce that's good for your family. At least some of you will have large gardens and perhaps a few also live off-grid.

As I attempt to document my current off-grid lifestyle and share decades of experience growing and harvesting my own produce, I will write about other plants that may be just as interesting to you as chia.

LongTimeMother links appearing on this page will take you to my hp profile page and a full list of my topics. I am excited by the obvious interest in growing and harvesting chia and hope you'll decide to tackle a few more new and interesting plants in the future.

Stay well, and thanks for reading. :)

Also by the same author ...

- [Sweet secrets of Stevia - Tips for growing and harvesting!](#)
How to grow and harvest stevia for maximum sweetness. Which stevia plant to buy if you want to grow your own. Why some stevia has a bitter taste, plus what to look for when buying stevia extracts.

- [Successfully living off the grid](#)
Tips to save money on power bills and begin the transition to a self sufficient lifestyle today.
- [Growing Organic Vegetables and Herbs](#)
Not only can you see the difference, you can taste the difference between fresh organic produce and store bought foods.
- [Food Allergies Testing for Anger Management in Children](#)
Before you allow your child to be labelled with a personality disorder, and prescribed medicine or therapy for anger management, undertake food allergy testing. The results may surprise you.

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