

# Castle FARM

KENT, 1892

## Information about your Hop Plant

Thank you for purchasing a Castle Farm Hop Plant! Mail Order hops are sent as bare-rooted plants. We endeavour to ensure they have had a good drink before we package them and that they spend the shortest possible time in transit to you, but it is important that you unpack and plant them as soon as they arrive.



### Planting hints

Unpack AS SOON AS POSSIBLE and put the roots in water or heel them in to moist ground while you prepare the ground for planting. Plant in a deep hole so that the base of the new season's shoots is at, or just below, ground level. Mix a little organic manure with the soil or, alternatively, sprinkle a well-balanced lawn or garden fertilizer sparingly around the hop after planting. Water in well.

### Location

Hops (*Humulus lupulus*) are tolerant of most soils types and planting locations but grow best in good soils in the sun. Once established, they have a very deep rooting system, so are relatively unaffected by dry weather. Avoid exposed or windy positions that may prevent shoots from climbing properly and cause browning of the hop flowers.

### Climbing requirements

Hops do not cling like ivy or creepers but climb by twining around a support. String, wires or trellis are all suitable. Rough coir twine is used in commercial hop gardens. Remember that when mature (after about three years) a standard hop will easily grow 5 metres between the end of April and early July, whilst a dwarf hop can grow up to 3.5 metre. Hops can be grown up through a tree or hedge but be careful not to locate them near delicate plants that might be smothered.

### Seasonal growth

Young plants will initially establish good rooting systems before putting on much growth above ground, so do not expect dramatic leafy growth in the first year. (In a commercial hop garden, they are considered to take about 3 years to reach viable production levels.)

For well-established plants, ensure that the string or support is in place by the end of April when the new shoots will be up to 30cm/12" long. Gently twist two or three shoots around the support in a clockwise direction. (When producing hops commercially for beer, or hop bines for decoration, two or three shoots are 'trained' up a maximum of three strings - so encouraging dense, vigorous growth.) Mature plants may produce too many shoots in the spring, so just break off the excess shoots at ground level.

Tiny burrs form in late July, developing into hops flowers that will last from mid-August to mid-September after which they begin to turn brown. The bines naturally die back in the autumn and should be cut off at ground level during the winter. Commercially, hops are prone to certain pests and diseases - damson-hop aphids, red spider mite, downy mildew etc. but isolated plants in gardens are unlikely to be badly affected.

### Harvesting

For brewing, hops are picked during the first half of September. Hops for decorative use should also be cut in early September and can be hung up fresh and left to dry out in position - making sure that they are not likely to be knocked or disturbed.

**Please note:** The stems and underside of the leaves can be quite scratchy and cause a mild irritation to the skin, so we recommend the wearing of gloves and long sleeves when handling fresh bines. Also hop flowers contain a yellow, pollen-like substance that can stain fabrics so take care when handling indoors.