

# Barley

*Hordeum vulgare* · Grass family

**DIFFICULTY** Moderate  
**TYPE** Annual, cool-season, direct sown  
**MATURITY** 20–28 weeks



SUN  
Full sun



WATER  
Moderate, low  
near maturity



SOIL PH  
6.0–8.0



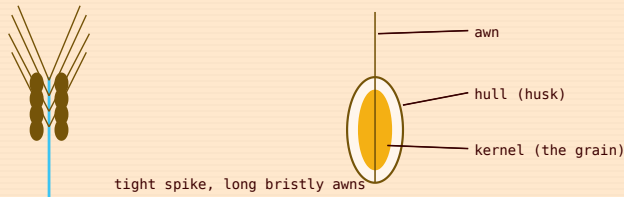
SPACING  
Broadcast or  
15cm rows



DEPTH  
2–4cm

## 01 Spike and awns

Barley carries its kernels in a tight spike, each one topped with a long, bristly awn. Hulled barley keeps a tough husk after threshing, so hull-less varieties are the easiest to use whole at home.



## 02 Planting

|        |                                                                                                                                                |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| METHOD | Broadcast sow or sow in 15cm rows, raking lightly to cover seed. Hull-less varieties are easiest for home use.                                 |
| SOIL   | Free-draining, neutral to slightly alkaline soil. Barley dislikes acid, waterlogged ground but copes with salty or dry soil better than wheat. |
| TIMING | Sow in autumn to early winter for a spring harvest — barley is usually the quickest of the winter cereals to ripen.                            |

Planting timing varies significantly by Australian climate zone. Set your zone above (or use the Find My Climate Zone tool) for guidance tailored to your own area.

## 03 Growing care

- Water moderately through growth, tapering off as the heads fill and ripen.
- Lime acid soil beforehand — barley is the most acid-sensitive of the common cereals.
- Weed early; a vigorous stand shades out weeds once established.
- Wear gloves and long sleeves at harvest — the awns are sharp and itchy.

## 04 Problems

- Net blotch** — brown netted or spotted lesions on leaves; avoid sowing into last season's barley stubble.
- Powdery mildew** — white powdery growth in humid, dense stands; sow thinly enough for airflow.
- Barley yellow dwarf virus** — yellowing leaves and stunting, spread by aphids; sow at the right time and control aphid build-up.
- Birds** — can strip ripening heads; netting may be needed for a small planting.

## 05 Harvest & storage

|            |                                                                                                                            |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SIGNS      | Stalks and heads turn golden and bend over, and the kernels are too hard to dent with a fingernail.                        |
| METHOD     | Cut the whole stand, dry fully, then thresh and winnow. Hulled barley still needs its husk removed; hull-less thresh free. |
| CURING     | Dry thoroughly before storage — damp grain spoils quickly.                                                                 |
| STORAGE    | Whole grain, cool, dry and airtight, 1–2+ years. Milled flour keeps only a few months.                                     |
| PRESERVING | See <a href="#">Dehydrating</a> (drying grain fully for storage) for ways to keep a harvest surplus.                       |

## 06 Companions & rotation

|                                                  |                           |                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PLANT NEARBY                                     | AVOID NEARBY              | ROTATION NOTE                                                                                                  |
| <a href="#">Field peas</a> <a href="#">Vetch</a> | No strong known conflicts | Avoid following barley, wheat or other cereals, which carry over leaf diseases; follow legumes where possible. |