“Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things
are corrupt without being charming
This is a fault
Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things
Are the cultivated
For these there is hope
They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only Beauty
There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book
Books are well written, or badly written
That is all”

Oscar Wilde
**Eggplant** (Solanum melongena) is a species of nightshade commonly known in British English as aubergine and also known as melongene, garden egg, or guinea squash. It is known in South Asia, Southeast Asia and South Africa as brinjal. It bears a fruit of the same name (commonly either “eggplant” in American and Australian English or “aubergine” in British English) that is widely used in cooking, most notably as an important ingredient in dishes such as Moussaka and Ratatouille. As a member of the genus *Solanum*, it is related to both the tomato and the potato. It was originally domesticated in India and Bangladesh from the wild nightshade, the thorn or bitter apple, *S. incanum.*

**DESCRIPTION**

The eggplant is a delicate, tropical perennial often cultivated as a tender or half-hardy annual in temperate climates. It grows 40 to 150 cm (16 to 57 in) tall, with large, coarsely lobed leaves that are 20 to 25 cm (3½ to 9 in) long and 5 to 10 cm (2 to 4 in) broad. Semiwild types can grow much larger, to 225 cm (7 ft) with large leaves over 30 cm (12 in) long and 15 cm (6 in) broad. The stem is often spiny. The flower is white to purple, with a five-lobed corolla and yellow stamens. The egg-shaped glossy black fruit has white flesh with a meaty texture. The cut surface of the flesh rapidly turns brown when the fruit is cut open. On wild plants, the fruit is less than 3 cm (1.2 in) in diameter, but very much larger in cultivated forms, reaching 30 cm (12 in) or more in length. The fruit is botanically classified as a berry and contains numerous small, soft seeds which are edible, but have a bitter taste because they contain nicotinoid alkaloids (it is a close relative of tobacco). **CULTIVATED VARIETIES**

Different varieties of the plant produce fruit of different size, shape, and color, though typically purple. The most widely cultivated varieties (cultivars) in Europe and North America today are elongated ovoid, 12 – 25 cm long (4½ to 9 in) and 6 – 9 cm broad (2 to 4 in) in a dark purple skin. A much wider range of shapes, sizes and colors is grown in India and elsewhere in Asia. Larger varieties weighing up to a kilogram (2.2 pounds) grow...