In Dominica, cassava can be grown throughout the year, but the best time to plant is at the start of the rainy season.

Cassava is mainly grown from cuttings. Always obtain them from reliable sources, ensuring the parent plants are healthy and high yielding.

Planting stakes should have a minimum of 4 nodes (eyes) and a diameter of at least 2 cm.

Plant stakes along contours at a 45-degree angle on ridged beds at a spacing of 1 m by 1 m.

In Dominica, like across most of the Caribbean, cassava is propagated by cuttings. Using clean, disease-free, high-quality planting material is critical to achieving a successful crop. The crop can be grown throughout the year. However, the best time to plant is at the start of the rainy season (June to October) to obtain robust plants and optimum tuber yields.

Select suitable parent plants
The parent plant from which you take the planting material should be healthy, free of pests and diseases and high yielding. The use of infected planting material for commercial production can lead to widespread outbreaks of disease from one cropping cycle to the next.

Stakes should be taken from healthy, vigorous plants between 8 and 18 months old.

Cut stakes from the parent plant using a sharp, clean, cutlass or handsaw. Handle the stakes with care, as their quality can rapidly deteriorate due to bruising and peeling.

Always obtain planting material from reliable sources such as other farmers, the Ministry of Blue and Green Economy, Agriculture and National Food Security and research organisations.
Storage of stakes

If you are not going to prepare the stakes for planting immediately, they should be stored in a cool place away from direct sunlight. Dehydrated stakes will result in poor germination.

It is a good practice to store stakes in an upright position with the base of the stems resting in the soil. Keep the soil moistened. Ideally the stakes should not be stored for more than 5 days.

Preparing the planting material

When you are ready to plant, cut the stakes (cuttings) into smaller pieces approximately 20 to 30 cm (8-12 inches) long with an average of 9 to 12 nodes (eyes). A minimum of 4 nodes is recommended. The diameter of the cuttings should be at least 2 cm thick.

Always use a clean, sharp pair of secateurs or a handsaw to prepare the cuttings. Take care to avoid damage to the nodes (eyes) and bruising of the peels. The middle part of the stake is the best section to take your cuttings. Avoid using green stems or older lignified and woody stem cuttings. Always group the cuttings according to the parts of the stem from which they were taken.

Dip cuttings in an insecticide or miticide solution for 5-10 minutes and allow to air dry before planting.

Always use approved chemicals and prepare them according to the manufacturer’s guidelines. Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when handling chemicals, as they are harmful to humans.

Planting

You can plant immediately or within two days of treatment. If planting both the bitter and sweet varieties, then it is recommended to plant them in separate plots.

Plant the stakes at a 45-degree angle on ridged beds at a spacing of 1 m by 1 m. At least two nodes should be above ground when planted. The buds must always face upwards.

Always plant along the contours.

In Dominica, planting is done manually. However, in some other Caribbean territories, farmers have modified their tractors to plant mechanically. This is viable on large acreages and where the slope is gentle to undulating.