

Cabbage

Cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*) can be grown in the garden from March to December. It is very cold hardy and can withstand temperatures as low as 15° to 20°F. Grows best in well-drained soils with high organic matter. Yields 10-18 lbs. per 10-foot row. Hardy biennial. Treat it as an annual.

Planting:

Start seeds indoors 4 to 6 weeks before the last frost date and harden off before setting out. It takes about 3 weeks to get plants ready from seeding to set during the summer months. For a fall crop, start seeds outdoors at mid-summer in a location with some protection from the sun and keep well watered. Plant only the earliest maturing varieties after July 1. Or sow a few seeds in your cold frame or garden every month to have cabbage plants to the end of the growing season.

Plants should be spaced 12"-18" in the row with rows 24"-30" apart.

Cultivation:

- **Fertilizing** – Medium feeder. Use starter fertilizer when transplanting, side-dress three weeks later (¼ cup 10-10-10 or equivalent per 10 feet of row). Avoid fertilizing during head formation, as this may cause excessive leaf growth and splitting.
- **Watering** – Water about every three days until seedlings are established. Plants need ample soil moisture throughout the

season. Watering is especially important when starting a fall crop in the summer.

- **Weeding** – Cultivate shallowly (2 inches or less) to control weeds. Cabbage roots are shallow.
- **Special Directions** – Plant spacing affects head size. Close spacing (12 inches apart in the row) produces small heads. Large-headed varieties are spaced wider. Small-headed varieties are fast maturing and can be succession planted throughout the season. Heads can be left on the plant in the garden for about 2 weeks in the summer, 3 to 4 weeks in the fall.

It is best not to plant cabbage family crops in the same spot year after year, since diseases and insect pests will build up. Rotate crops within your garden.

Harvesting:

When heads become firm; size will vary with variety, fertility, and spacing. If unable to harvest at maturity, bend the stem over to break part of the roots to reduce the incidence of head splitting.

Storage and Preservation:

Cabbage to be cooked can be stored in a refrigerator for about 2 weeks. Stored in very cold (32°F), moist (95%RH) conditions, it will keep up to 5 months.

Nutrition: A source of Vitamins C, K, & A and folate

Preparation & Use:

Rinse cabbage leaves in running water. Can be quartered and steamed; shredded for sautéing or making fresh salads such as coleslaw; and fermented to make sauerkraut.

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