

Cauliflower

Hardiness:

Half-hardy biennial. Treat as an annual.

Temperature: Cool (60°- 65°F)

Planting: Set out 5 to 7 week old transplants 3 to 4 weeks before the frost-free date. Seed in beds or flats for fall transplanting or direct seed into garden soil. Do not plant overly mature transplants. They will produce "button heads."

Days to Maturity: 50 - 80 from transplanting

Spacing: 15 - 24 in x 24 - 36 in

Fertilizer Needs:

Heavy feeder. Use starter fertilizer when transplanting, and side-dress three weeks later and as needed (¼ lb. 10-10-10 or equivalent per 10 feet of row).

Harvest:

Cut before flower sections begin to separate. The curd should be compact, firm, white, and fairly smooth. Leave a ruff of leaves surrounding head when harvested to prolong keeping quality. Cauliflower heads become grainy when overly mature.

Approximate Yield (per 10 foot row): 8 to 12 lbs.

Storage: Very cold (32°F), moist (95% Relative Humidity) conditions, 2 to 4 weeks.

Cultural Practices:

Many gardeners experience "buttoning" of cauliflower heads in the spring. This is a failure of the cauliflower head to gain in size after it reaches about an inch or less in diameter, usually due to environmental stress such as overgrown transplants, or hot and cold temperatures during the head formation period. Maryland gardeners generally have better success with fall production. Seed for fall cauliflower should be sown in mid to late July.

Blanching:

Blanch cauliflower when the head is about 2 to 3 inches. Pull three to four large outer leaves up over the head and fasten with a rubber band, or break over the top of the cauliflower and tuck in on the other side of the curd. Blanching time is normally 4 to 8 days but may take longer in the fall. If weather is warm during the blanching period, tie the leaves loosely to allow air circulation. Self-blanching cultivars which have leaves that grow up over the head may eliminate the need for this practice.

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Author: Jon Traunfeld, University of Maryland Extension Specialist, Home and Garden Information Center, Vegetables & Fruits

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