

How to Grow Cabbage

General

Cabbage is full of nutrients. To preserve its vitamins and mineral content, do not overcook cabbage. Avoid cooking in aluminum pans to keep the smell down. Cabbages are highly ornamental in the garden—choose varieties for colour (deep-red, blue-green, dark-green) and leaf texture (savoyed or flat leaf).

Latin

Brassica oleracea var. *capitata*

Family: Brassicaceae

Difficulty

Moderately difficult

Season & Zone

Season: Cool season

Exposure: Full-sun

Zone: 3-10

Timing

Sow indoors beginning in March and transplant outdoors from April to the end of July. Overwintering cabbage is sown outdoors during July. Optimal soil temperature: 10-30°C (50-85°F). Seeds should germinate in 7-10 days.

Starting

Sow 3 or 4 seeds per pot, 5mm (¼") deep, under very bright light. Thin to the strongest plant. Space transplants 45-60cm (18-24") apart in rows 60-90cm (24-36") apart.

Growing

Ideal pH: 6.5-7.0. Cabbage does best in humus-rich soil amended with composted manure. Mix ½ cup complete organic fertilizer into the soil beneath each transplant. If growth slows, side dress with a little more complete organic fertilizer. Heads of early varieties can split from over-maturity, rapid growth after heavy rain, or irrigation after dry spells. Splits can be delayed by twisting the plant or cultivating deeply next to plants in order to break roots and slow growth. Fall and winter varieties stand in the garden longer without splitting. If direct sown, add 20-25 days to the maturity date.

Harvest

Cabbage heads are ready when they're firm to the touch, and when the interior is fairly dense. Heads will split when they're allowed to overly mature. Rapid growth due to excess watering and fertility will also cause splitting of the head. Plant early, midseason and late varieties to spread out your harvest. Late varieties tend to be better for storage or for making sauerkraut. Early varieties tend not to store well.

Diseases & Pests

Diseases

Purple blotch (*Alternaria porri*) - Avoid wetting foliage if possible. Water early in the day so plant parts above the ground dry as quickly as possible. Allow for air circulation, and avoid crowding plants. Pull weeds around plants and garden area to increase air circulation. When plants are not wet, remove and destroy affected plant parts. In autumn rake and destroy all fallen or diseased leaves and fruit.

Clubroot - If soil infested, add lime to raise soil pH to 7.2. Locate new plants in part of garden different from previous year's location. If that is not possible, remove infested soil and replace with fresh soil. Purchase healthy transplants or start seed in sterile potting mix or fresh ground. Remove and discard or destroy entire infested plant along with immediately surrounding soil and soil clinging to roots.

Pests

Flea Beetles - Use row covers to help protect plants from early damage. Put in place at planting and remove before temperatures get too hot in midsummer. Control weeds.

Cutworms - Control weeds. Cardboard collars around each plant give good protection.

Cabbage root maggot - White maggot larvae tunnel in and feed on roots of plants. Damage causes wilting early on, death of plants later on. Use row covers to help protect plants from early damage.

Cabbageworms - Handpick and destroy. Row covers may be useful on small plantings to help protect plants from early damage. Put in place at planting and remove before temperatures get too hot in midsummer.

Cabbage aphids - A hard stream of water can be used to remove aphids from plants. Wash off with water occasionally as needed early in the day. Check for evidence of natural enemies such as gray-brown or bloated parasitized aphids and the presence of alligator-like larvae of lady beetles and lacewings.

Companion Planting

All Brassicas benefit from chamomile, dill, mint, rosemary, and sage. Avoid planting near eggplants, peppers, potatoes, or tomatoes.



