

How to Grow Kale

General

Kale contains higher levels of beta-carotene than any other green vegetable, and is also high in vitamin C and calcium. Collards are not far behind. All are easy to grow, vigorous, nutritious, resistant to cold, and easy to harvest and prepare. And the greens even get sweeter after frost.

Latin

Brassica oleracea var. *acephala*

Family: Brassicaceae

Difficulty

Easy

We Recommend: Lacinato- Nero Di Toscana Precoe. This is a summertime favourite. While Lacinato is less cold hardy than many of its cousins, it forms tall, almost architectural rosettes of substantial leaves. Packed with flavour and nutrients, it's a great variety for the beginner kale farmer.

Season & Zone

Season: Cool season

Exposure: Full sun

Zone: Winter hardy to Zone 6.

Timing

Direct sow March to mid-July for summer to winter harvests. Optimal soil temperature: 10-30°C (50-85°F). Seeds should germinate in 7-10 days.

Starting

Sow 3-4 seeds 5mm (¼") deep in each spot you want a plant to grow.. Thin to the strongest plant. Space 45-60cm (18-24") apart in rows 75-90cm (30-36") apart.

Growing

Ideal pH: 6.0-6.8. Add lime to the bed 3 weeks prior to sowing. Kale likes well-drained, fertile soil high in organic matter. This plant prefers plentiful, consistent moisture. Drought is tolerable, but quality and flavor of leaves can suffer. Mix ¼ cup of complete organic fertilizer into the soil beneath each transplant, or use 1 cup beneath every 3m (10') of seed furrow.

Harvest

Kale and collards can both be grown as a cut and come again crop for salad mixes by direct-seeding and cutting when plants are 5-8cm (2-3") tall. They will re-grow. Or pick leaves from the bottom up on mature plants as you need them. In spring, the surviving plants start to flower, so eat the delicious flowering stems and buds.

Diseases & Pests

Protect from cabbage moths and other insect pests with floating row cover. Prevent disease with a strict 4-year crop rotation, avoiding planting Brassicas in the same spot more than once every four years.

Companion Planting

All Brassicas benefit from chamomile, dill, mint, rosemary, and sage. Avoid planting near eggplants, peppers, potatoes, or tomatoes. Plant collards near tomatoes, which repel the flea beetles that so often look for collard leaves to eat.



Kale and Collards



Lacinato

