

Kale



Kale is much more accommodating than the other brassicas, such as cabbage, cauliflower, and brussel sprouts. It will grow in nearly all soils provided the drainage is adequate.

Pick a reasonably sunny spot for the site where the plants are to grow. As the seedlings are not transplanted until June or July, it is usual to use land which has recently been vacated by peas, early potatoes or other early summer crops. Do not dig just consolidate the ground by walking on it, removing weeds and raking in a general fertilizer. The ground should not be loose or spongy at planting time.

Sowing Time

May (plant out in June/July).



Crop Care

Hoe regularly and tread firmly around the stems to prevent them from rocking in the wind, water young plants in dry weather.

Pick off yellowing leaves. As autumn approaches, earth up around the stems to protect the roots from frost and wind rock. Stake tall varieties if growing on an exposed site. In winter the plants look in a sorry state. In early spring they will recover and put on a fresh crop of side shoots. Feed with a liquid fertiliser in March to encourage growth.

Harvesting

There is more skill involved in harvesting kale than growing it. Harvest from the beginning of November starting at the crown of the plant. Removing just a few young leaves each time you pick. Use a sharp knife or sharp downward tug. Do not gather mature or yellowing leaves for kitchen use. The stripping of the crown will stimulate the development of succulent side shoots. These are gathered between February and May from all varieties, breaking them off or using a sharp knife for their removal. They should be 4-5" long and young.

Grow Your Own Brassicas



***Cabbages *Cauliflower *Broccoli
*Brusels *Kale**

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Cabbages

Pick a reasonably sunny spot, which has not been used to grow cabbages or any other brassicas in the past 3 years. As with all brassicas choose a firm, non-acid soil, which has reasonable drainage. Prepare the site a couple of months before by adding some extra humus into the soil. Two weeks prior to planting apply a Growmore or similar fertiliser.

Sowing Time

Spring July-August.	Winter March-May.	Summer April-May.
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Crop Care

If birds are a problem protect the seedlings from sparrows and pigeons. Hoe around crop until the plants are large enough to suppress weeds. Water if the weather is dry. Always apply a liquid feed as the heads begin to mature. In autumn earth-up the stems of spring cabbage. During winter, firm down any plants loosened by wind or frost.

Harvesting

In March thin out the spring cabbage rows. Young leaves can be used as spring greens. Leave the remaining plants to heart up for cutting in April or May. Cabbages are harvested by cutting with a sharp knife close to ground level. With spring and summer varieties cut a 1/2" deep cross into the stump and a second crop of small cabbages will appear.

Cauliflowers

Choose a sunny position. Dig in autumn – and dig in some well-rotted manure. Use lime if necessary in winter. In spring apply a general fertiliser two weeks before planting.



Sowing Time

Winter/Spring Sept-October.	Summer January-March.	Autumn May-June.
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Crop Care

Hoe regularly and provide some means of protection from birds i.e. some kind of netting. Cauliflowers must never be kept short of water, especially in the early stages, or very small heads will quickly form. Feed occasionally as this crop is a hungry one. With summer varieties bend a few leaves over the developing curd to protect it from sun. Protect the winter crop from frost and snow by breaking a few leaves over the curd.

Harvesting

Begin cutting some of the cauliflowers while they are still fairly small rather than waiting for them all to mature and produce a glut. Cut in the morning when the heads still have dew on them, but in frosty weather wait until midday.

Broccoli

Broccoli like other brassicas can fail in loose and starved soil. Ideally the ground should be firm and rich in organic matter. Pick a reasonably sunny spot where the plants are going to grow to maturity. Dig in autumn. Work in plenty of well-rotted manure or compost if the soil is poor. In spring apply a general fertiliser such as Growmore. Also use protective collars if cabbage root fly is a known problem, this applies to all brassicas.

Sowing Time

April-May.



Crop Care

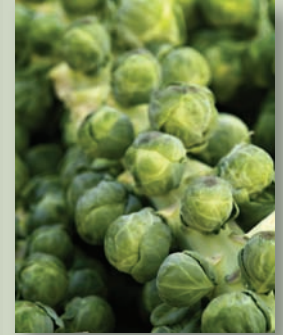
Hoe regularly and provide some means of protection from the birds i.e. under netting. Summer care consists of watering in dry weather and applying a mulch to conserve moisture. Occasional feeding with a liquid fertiliser will improve the crop. With the approach of winter draw up soil around the stems and stake the plants if the site is exposed.

Harvesting

The time to cut is when the flower shoots (spears) are well-formed, but before the small flower buds have opened. Once in flower the spears are woody and tasteless. Cut or snap off the central spear first. In a few varieties this will be a cauliflower like head. Side shoots will be produced and these should be picked regularly. The spears are generally 4-6" long and cropping should continue for about 6 weeks.

Brussels Sprouts

Prepare the soil in the same way that you would any cabbage add additional fertiliser prior to planting.



Sowing Time

March-April.



Crop Care

Birds can be a problem, protect the seedlings from sparrows and the mature crop from pigeons. Hoe regularly, to keep weeds down. Water the plants during dry weather. The mature crops rarely need watering if the soil has been properly prepared. Brussel sprouts do respond well from a foliar feed in early summer

Harvesting

Begin picking the sprouts (buttons) at the base of the stem when they have reached the size of a walnut and are still tightly closed. Snap them off with a downward tug or cut them off with a sharp knife. Work up the stem at each cropping session, removing yellow leaves and any open sprouts as you go. Remove only a few sprouts at a time from each stem. When all the sprouts have gone, cut off the stem tops and cook as a cabbage. Dig up and dispose of the stems.