

Home Gardening Series

Kale

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Vegetables

Environment

Light – sunny
Soil – well-drained
Fertility – medium-rich
pH – 5.6 to 7.0
Temperature – cool
Moisture – moist

Culture

Planting – direct seed, spring or fall
Spacing – 2-6 x 24 inches, thin
Hardiness – cool-season biennial
Fertilizer – medium

Kale – *Brassica oleracea* *acephala*

Kale are cabbage-like plants native to the eastern Mediterranean or to Asia Minor. Their wild forms have become widely distributed from their place of origin and are found on the coasts of northern Europe and Britain.

Apparently, all the principal forms of kale we know today have been known for at least 2,000 years.

Kale (also known as non-heading cabbage and broccoli) are hardy cool-season greens of the cabbage family



rich in vitamins A and C. Although kale tolerates summer heat, it grows best in the spring and fall. The highly curled, bluish-green leaves (some varieties have plain leaves) do not form a solid head.

Flower-like cultivars of kale are quite colorful. They are planted as an accent or as pot plants. The leaves develop their highest color under cool fall weather. In addition to serving as ornamentals, kale plants are used for greens as a garnish or in salads and may be cooked in place of cabbage.

Cultural Practices

Planting Time

Plant kale any time from early spring to early summer. Planting in late summer provides harvest from fall until the ground freezes hard in winter.

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Cultivars

Crop	Cultivar	Days to Maturity	Seed Per 100 Feet of Row	Remarks
Kale	Vates	55	1/4 oz	Dwarf curled blue-green leaves, hardy, slow bolting, does not yellow in cold weather.
	Red Russian	40	1/4 oz	Red leaves, early crop, tender.
	Improved Dwarf Siberian	58	1/4 oz	Hardy, heat tolerant, blue-green leaves with frilled edges, bushy.
	Winterbor	52	1/4 oz	Vates-like leaves, tall, frost tolerant.
	Dwarf Blue	45	1/4 oz	Low-growing, hardy kale. Finely curled, blue-green leaves.
	Green Lance	55	1/4 oz	Chinese broccoli or gailon. Regrows for repeated cuttings.

Spacing and Depth of Planting

Sow seed 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep in rows. Thin the seedlings to 8 to 12 inches apart. The seedlings may be transplanted.

Care

Kale are relatively easy to grow, requiring only normal cultivation and watering. They can be treated like collards or mustard greens.

Harvesting

The lower leaves may be individually picked when they are small and tender (8 to 10 inches or shorter). The entire kale plant may be cut. Quality is

improved by frost, and the plant can withstand a light freeze. Late summer planting usually gives best results. Kale can be harvested until a severe freeze in the winter.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Will new leaves develop if the small leaves at the center of the plants are removed?

A. No. Removing the apical meristem prevents further growth.

Q. Are ornamental kales edible?

A. Yes, they are edible but are more highly valued for their ornamental value.

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