



All About Growing Cabbage

Think cabbage is boring? Think again! Try growing cabbage in your garden to enjoy green, savoy and red cabbage year-round.

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(For details on growing many other vegetables and fruits, visit our *Crop at a Glance* <http://www.motherearthnews.com/crop-guide-growing-organicvegetables-fruits-zl0z1211zsto.aspx> collection page.)

Dependable, nutritious, and delicious raw or cooked, both green and red cabbage are among the most productive cool-season crops. Gardeners growing cabbage in cool climates can grow huge, blue-ribbon heads. Where hot summers divide the cool seasons, fast-maturing varieties do well in spring and again in fall. All types of cabbage are at their best in late fall, after exposure to light frosts.

Types of Cabbage

Green cabbage varieties vary in their earliness and mature size. Smaller varieties can be grown at close spacing.

Red cabbage provides higher levels of vitamins A and C than other types of cabbage do, and its bright color is always beautiful on the plate.

Savoy cabbage produces a crisp heart and crinkled, dark green outer leaves.

Pointed cabbage develops conical instead of rounded heads. Its upright growth habit and tight outer leaves protect pointed cabbage from insects and sun.

Napa cabbage (or Chinese cabbage) matures quickly and produces crisp, mild-flavored leaves. Learn more in *Growing Asian Greens* (<http://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/asian-greens-zmaz10aszraw.aspx>).

For more information about types of cabbage and our recommended varieties, see our *Cabbage at a Glance* (<http://www.motherearthnews.com/organicgardening/cabbage-at-a-glance-zm0z12aszkon.aspx>) chart.

When to Plant Cabbage

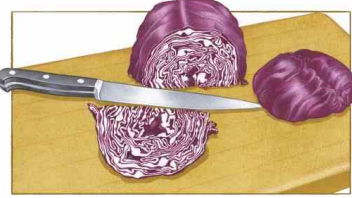
In spring, start seeds indoors or in a cold frame eight to 10 weeks before your last spring frost, and set out hardened-off seedlings when they are about 6 weeks old. Seeds germinate best at 65 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

In summer, start seeds 12 to 14 weeks before your first fall frost, and transplant the seedlings to the garden when they are 4 to 6 weeks old. Plant early and late varieties to stretch your harvest season.

How to Plant Cabbage

Growing cabbage plants requires regular feeding and abundant sun. Choose a sunny, well-drained site with fertile soil that has a pH between 6.0 and 6.5.

Loosen the planting bed and mix in a 2-inch layer of compost along with a standard application of a balanced organic fertilizer or well-composted manure. Water the fertilized bed thoroughly before setting out seedlings. Allow 18 to 20 inches between plants for 4-pound varieties; larger varieties may need more room. Varieties that will produce heads that weigh less than 2 pounds (check your seed packet) can be spaced 12 inches apart.



Harvesting and Storage

Begin harvesting cabbage when the heads feel firm, using a sharp knife to cut the heads from the stem. Remove and compost rough outer leaves, and promptly refrigerate harvested heads. If cut high, many varieties will produce several smaller secondary heads from the roots and crown left behind.

Cabbage will store in the refrigerator for two weeks or more, and you can keep your fall crop in cool storage for several months. Clean cabbage carefully, because heads may harbor hidden insects.

Cabbage yield is generally about 1 pound per foot of row. For the spring crop, three cabbage plants per person is probably sufficient for fresh eating. Grow another four plants per person in fall if you plan to store your cabbage or make sauerkraut.