

GROWING CABBAGE



Cabbage is a hardy vegetable that grows especially well in fertile soils. There are various shades of green available, as well as red or purple types. Head shape varies from the standard round to flattened or pointed. Most varieties have smooth leaves, but the Savoy types have crinkly textured leaves.

Cabbage is easy to grow if you select suitable varieties and practice proper culture and insect management. Always regarded as a good source of vitamins, cabbage recently has been shown to have disease-preventive

properties as well. Transplant early cabbage soon enough that it matures before the heat of summer. Many varieties are available and two or three varieties with different maturities can provide harvest over a long period. Hardened plants are tolerant of frosts and can be planted among the earliest of cool-season garden vegetables. Cabbage is easily transplanted from either bare-root or cell-pack-grown plants. Space plants 12 to 24 inches apart in the row, depending upon the variety and the size of head desired. The closer the spacing, the smaller the heads. Early varieties are usually planted 12 inches apart in all directions. Early varieties produce 1 to 3 pound heads and later varieties produce 4 to 8 pound heads.

Use starter fertilizer when transplanting and side-dress with nitrogen fertilizer when the plants are half grown. Cultivate shallowly to keep down weeds. Ample soil moisture is necessary throughout the growing season to produce good cabbage.

Cabbage can be harvested anytime after the heads form. For highest yield, cut the cabbage heads when they are solid (firm to hand pressure) but before they crack or split. When heads are mature, a sudden heavy rain may cause heads to crack or split wide open. The exposed internal tissue soon becomes unusable. Harvest and salvage split heads as soon as possible after they are discovered.

Yellow or **fusarium wilt** is a relatively common disease that causes the leaves of plants to wilt and die. The first sign of the disease is yellowing and browning of the lower leaves. The plants are stunted before wilting occurs. Grow yellows-resistant (YR) or yellows-tolerant varieties. Most modern hybrids have this tolerance or resistance bred into them.

Blackleg and **black rot** are two diseases that cause severe losses. The plants may be stunted, turn yellow and die. Blackleg is named for the black cankers on the stem. The taproot often rots away. Black rot can be recognized by large, V-shaped, yellow-to-

brown areas in the leaves, starting at the leaf edge. The veins turn black. Soft rot usually follows black-rot infection.

Control is essentially the same for blackleg and black rot. Both diseases are spread by seed, transplants and insects. Buy seed that has been hot-water treated to kill the disease organisms. Do not buy transplants that are wilted, are an unhealthy shade of green, or have black spots on the stems or leaves.

When you find diseased plants in the garden, collect the leaves, stems and tops; and burn or dispose of them. Do not put diseased plants into the compost pile. Avoid cultural practices (crowding, overwatering, planting in poorly drained soil and inadequate insect control) that support the disease organisms of black rot and blackleg. If possible, grow black-rot-resistant varieties.