

Growing Cold Season Vegetables

Planting These cool weather vegetables are easily grown in Minnesota and include Broccoli, Cauliflower, Brussels Sprouts, Kale, and Kohlrabi. Cold season vegetables can be planted in the garden when the daytime temps moderate between 65-70F, usually around the end of April. Transplants are recommended for Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower and should be planted at least 18" apart. Kale and kohlrabi can be grown from transplants or directly seeded, space 8"-12" apart. It's advisable to amend the soil with compost and apply a balanced fertilizer such as a 10-10-10.

Growing It is important to water properly and manage weeds until harvest. An average of one inch of water is needed to maintain steady healthy growth. If in doubt, work our fingers 1 1/2" into the soil to test for moisture. If the soil feels dry, water until the ground is saturated but not soggy. Check soil again in one week. Cold season vegetables do not compete well with weeds; cultivate the soil surface as they appear. Avoid digging deeply into the soil, cold season vegetables have shallow roots that are easily damaged. Consider mulching around the plants, this will prevent weeds and retain soil moisture.

Harvesting

Broccoli can be harvested when the main head reaches the desired size but before yellow flowers begin to appear. After removing the head, the plant will continue to produce side shoots which can be harvested until the plant begins to suffer from hot summer weather.

Cauliflower can be cut from the stem when the head reaches the desired size. If grown past the ideal harvest time, the head will become 'ricey' or discolored. To 'blanch' the heads, see *tips* below.

Cabbage can be harvested when the head is the desired size.

Kohlrabi can be uprooted when the bulb is 2"-3" in diameter.

Kale can be cut one leaf at a time or the whole plant can be harvested.

Brussels Sprouts do not mature until late summer and early fall. Harvest the lowest cabbage-like vegetables when they reach 1"-1 1/2" in diameter and before the leaves begin to yellow. The plant will continue to produce little heads until a hard killing frost.

Pest and Disease Control Cabbage worms and split heads are the most common problems when growing cold season vegetables. Cabbage worms can be controlled by inspecting the plant and removing them by hand when infestation is light. If they become more problematic, apply an insecticide intended for use on vegetables. Note the withdrawal date between insecticide application and harvest. Split heads are caused by heavy rain after a drought, excess fertilizer, or severe insect damage. Delayed harvesting can also encourage spitting. Proper watering and fertilizer techniques can help prevent these problems.

Tips Most cauliflower varieties require 'blanching' to remain white. When the curds are 2" across, tie the leaves around the head with twine. This not only keeps the head from becoming sun-scalded but can deter some types of pests.

During warm summer weather, most cold season vegetables crops will 'bolt'. This rapid growth causes cracking and bitterness.

Get a fall crop too! Consider growing cold season vegetables during autumn for a late harvest of fresh vegetables. You can direct seed them in late July or start seed under controlled conditions

Radish seed can be sown as soon as you can work the soil.

Continual sowing will produce a staggered harvest so the whole crop isn't ready at once. For a family of four, sow about 20 radish seeds every 2 weeks.

Plant them all spring and then again starting in mid to late July.



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