

Cabbage

Cabbage, a popular vegetable because it stores well, thrives in cool-weather areas. In southern gardens, it often is replaced by other leafy greens such as collards.

Varieties

Early-, mid-, and late-season varieties of cabbage exist. The ones that mature late in the season store the best. Study the catalogs carefully to see which varieties are recommended for your area and to find varieties that match your needs. Plant more than one variety to extend the harvest.

Planting

Start seeds indoors about six to eight weeks before the frost-free date in your area. If you buy seedlings at a garden center, choose healthy, stocky plants no larger than 4 inches tall. Get seedlings into the garden two to four weeks before the frost-free date, just as soon as you can work the soil. If there is an unexpected frost, use cloches to protect the young plants. Plant late-maturing varieties later in the season. If cutworms are common in your area, use cutworm collars around the stems of the young plants. Protect seedlings with wire cages or a fence if rodents are a nuisance. Remove these when heads begin to form.

Care

Provide cabbage with cool, moist soil enriched with lots of organic matter and 10-10-10 fertilizer. Apply a thick mulch around the bases of the plants to keep them moist. Encourage quick and uniform growth for the best heads. Watch for damage by cabbageworms. If you see small holes in the leaves, immediately spray with *Bacillus thuringiensis* at weekly intervals. Handpick worms whenever you see them.

Harvest

Begin harvesting before the heads mature. Twist the heads off or cut them with a knife. Cabbage plants often produce several smaller heads to replace the one picked early in the season.

