

Chinese Cabbage

Because of its mild flavor, Chinese cabbage is excellent raw in salads and coleslaw, but it is even better cooked in stir-fried dishes.

Varieties

The three kinds of Chinese cabbage are: Chinese chard cabbage or bok choy, which is loose-leaved, easy to grow, and quick maturing; Chinese mustard greens, which are good for succession cropping; and true Chinese cabbage, which forms long, narrow heads over an extended season. True Chinese cabbage is the toughest of the three to grow.

Planting

Prepare a bed rich in organic matter for good drainage, aeration, and water retention. Mix peat, compost, or well-rotted manure into the soil with a sprinkling of commercial fertilizer. Plant Chinese chard cabbage and Chinese mustard greens in spring and fall. Plant several plantings for an extended harvest. Plant true Chinese cabbage for fall harvest in the North and for winter harvest in the South.

Care

As plants emerge, thin to stand every 8 to 12 inches. Surround the plants with a thick mulch to keep soil moist and cool. Keep plants moist for best growth (the faster the growth, the better the taste). Feed young plants with supplemental applications of a high-nitrogen fertilizer every 10 to 14 days until just before harvest. If you like, blanch Chinese cabbage by placing milk cartons over the plants' lower portions, but leave the tops exposed. Blanching improves the taste, but destroys vitamins.

Harvest

Pick leaves as soon as needed on leafy, nonheading varieties. For heading varieties, pull plants when heads are large and firm. Strip off damaged leaves and cut off the roots.