

## **Collards**

Collards are leafy members of the cabbage family that yield heavily over a long harvest season. Because collards tolerate hot weather, they are widely grown in the South, where cabbages do poorly. In northern gardens, collards grow well as a mid-season crop when planted after earlier crops mature.

### **Varieties**

The best varieties are 'Georgia' and 'Vates' (a compact, dwarflike variety).

### **Planting**

Prepare a bed of loose soil enriched with organic matter and a sprinkling of fertilizer. Sow seeds any time during the spring, spacing rows about 2 feet apart. Replace an early crop of peas with collards to take advantage of the nitrogen left behind by peas.

### **Care**

As plants mature, thin to at least 6 inches apart. Thinnings are both delicious and nutritious. Keep plants moist at all times. Because collards have shallow roots that damage easily when hoed, retard weed growth with a 2- to 4- inch mulch applied when the plants are several inches high. Side-dress with nitrogen-rich fertilizer every three to four weeks to stimulate leafier growth. If cabbageworms attack, spray weekly with *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

### **Harvest**

Pick the outer leaves of collards as they develop, leaving the inner leaf buds to grow for later pickings. Don't remove all the leaves from one plant.