

Kale

Kale, like other members of the cabbage family, likes it cool. Once growing, kale is a tough plant and can put up with a lot of abuse, including hard frosts and heavy freezes. Its deeply crinkled blue-green leaves make it a natural for striking ornamental plantings.

Varieties

The two main types of kale are Scotch and Siberian. These come in both smooth and curly-leaved varieties. Three of the best varieties for the home garden are 'Vates,' 'Dwarf Blue Curled,' and 'Dwarf Siberian.'

Planting

Because it is hardy and its flavor improves with a mild frost, grow kale so it matures in cool to cold weather. Sow seeds $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep in rows $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet apart. Or scatter seeds over a wide band for wide-row gardening.

Care

Early in the season, watch for flea beetles. Dust the plants with diatomaceous earth or spray with carbaryl. Mulch around plants to keep roots cool and damp throughout the season. Water frequently if soil dries. Handpick any weeds that pop up through the mulch. Do not cultivate close to the plants; you may damage their shallow root system. To increase yield, side-dress with fertilizer every few weeks. .

Harvest

Pick leaves before they reach 8 inches in length. The central buds of the kale plants will supply a continuous harvest if you pick only the outer leaves as they mature. If you want to harvest the crop in the North during winter, cover the plants with a thick layer of mulch (up to 12 inches of straw).