

CAULIFLOWER

Chou Fleur

Brassica oleracea var. botrytis

Brassicaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

The Cruciferae or cole family of vegetables is thought to have originated in the eastern Mediterranean and Asia Minor. Cauliflower is generally suited to temperate climates, preferring cool, moist soil and air.

Uses

The heads are cut and eaten while the buds are still closed. In order to whiten the head of Cauliflower, the large leaves are pulled over the “curd” to provide shade until harvest.

Common Names

- Spanish
 - Coliflor

Cultivation

- Elevation: cool, dry conditions; in the tropics may only occur above 1000m (3280 feet).
- Rainfall: 2.5 cm (1inch) weekly, use mulch to help the soil retain moisture.
- Soil Types: Heavy feeder, especially magnesium, boron, molybdenum. May need to add dolomitic limestone, borax or ammonium molybdate, prefers a soil pH of 6.0 to 7.0.
- Temperature Range: 10°-25° C, (55°-70° F), can withstand frost and mild freezes. Hot weather causes Cauliflower to bolt (begin seed production) and the taste of the plant becomes bitter.
- Day length sensitivity: none. Seeds can be started indoors, 8-10 weeks before gradually moving the transplants into the outdoors and then to the garden.

Transplant with 45 cm (18 in) on all sides or near taller plants that will provide some shade.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Cauliflower heads can be harvested 60-120 days from transplanting or when heads are 15 cm (6 in) in diameter. All the varieties of *Brassica oleracea* will cross pollinate. Keep the different varieties at least 1000 m (3280 ft) apart if pure seed is desired. Do not harvest the head; let the pods dry to a light brown before harvesting the seeds. Seeds will remain viable for up to four years if kept dry and cool.

Pests and Diseases

Move the location of the Cauliflower crop yearly as the soil can harbor microorganisms that can re-infect each year's crop. The greatest pest is the caterpillar or larva stage of many insects that chew holes in the leaves, bore into heads, and leave webs and droppings to rot the plant. Inspect new seedlings often to pick off caterpillars. Early and continuous treatments are necessary with rotenone or Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) sprays, both non-toxic to humans when used in moderation. Other methods to discourage caterpillars are: row covers, pheromone lures, or companion crops that are strong-smelling such as sweet basil, alliums or marigolds.

Cooking and Nutrition

Raw or briefly-cooked Cauliflower is a good source of vitamin C, calcium and low in calories. Flavor and nutrients are lost very quickly after harvest if the heads are not kept cool.

References

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