

# CABBAGE

*Brassica oleracea var. capitata*

Brassicaceae

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## ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

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### Description

Cabbage is a hardy, leafy vegetable that forms a compact, round head. It is native to southern Europe but can be grown in tropical or semi-tropical areas in cooler highlands where the winters are mild and there is a good supply of moisture.

### Uses

Cabbage is a valuable garden and commercial crop as it is easy to grow, transport and store

### Common Names

- Spanish
  - Col
- French
  - chou cabus

### Cultivation

- Elevation: grows best in highlands above 800 m ( 2624 ft)
- Rainfall: 380-500 mm (15-30 in); a shallow root system needs moisture throughout its growing season. Heavy mulch is recommended to retain soil moisture.
- Soil: Grows best in soil with high organic content, pH of 6.5-7.5. Acid soils need lime prior to planting.
- Temperature: Best head formation at average daily temperatures of 15-20° C (59-68° F) with night temperatures at least 5° C (41° F) or lower; light frost is tolerated. Heat may cause heads to split.

Seeds of early varieties can be started indoors and transplanted into the garden 4-5 weeks later when seedlings have 4-6 leaves. Seeds planted directly into the garden, should be 40-50 cm (15-19 in) x 55-60 cm (21-23 in) apart. Early varieties can form heads in 60 days or late varieties can take up to 120 days. Density of planting determines size of heads.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

Mature cabbage plants can remain in the ground, covered by leaves or straw until after frost but before a hard freeze. Other options for storage are to dig a 3 ft pit in a shady area, cover the bottom with neem leaves and 3 in of sand. Pull up the whole cabbage plant, stack heads close together, bottoms-up. Cover plants with a 7.5 cm (3 in) layer of fresh, banana leaves and 20 – 25 cm (8-10 in) of soil. Water the pit lightly twice a week. Cabbage can be kept for 6 months. Cabbage rarely sets seed in the tropics as low temperatures are required for many weeks. Seed stalks may be formed the second season when temperatures between the seasons are below 10° C (50° F) for 30 days or 15° C (60° F) for 60 days. Harvest the dry pods, hang in the shade, over a cloth for one week. After winnowing, seeds will store for 4-6 years in dry, cool conditions.

### Pests and Diseases

Larvae of butterflies and flies that feed on cabbage are becoming resistant to BT spray. Try dusting with flour early in the day, dousing with sour milk, spreading wood ashes on the soil, spraying with liquids containing neem oil, garlic, hot peppers, horseradish and liquid detergent. Also try planting collards or mustard, “trap crops”, around the perimeter of the crop.

### Cooking and Nutrition

Cabbage is eaten raw in salads, pickled as sauerkraut and cooked in soups and stews. Low in calories and fat, high in vitamins B, C, calcium and phosphorus, cabbage should be minimally cooked to retain its nutrients.

### References

[Plants for a Future](#)