

Cultural Details: Cabbage

VHT009

Cabbage is a versatile vegetable with many varieties cropping throughout the year. It can be classified by types or by cropping period:

Spring: Pointed Cabbage – conical in shape planted in early spring for mature heads later in the season.

Summer: Ball head – round compact heads sown in April ready to cut in August and September. Ball heads also come as red cabbage, which is more popular in Europe.

While most summer cabbages are ball head some pointed varieties exist such as Greyhound and Hispi.

Winter: Drum Head – these have flatter heads than ball headed cabbages and are sown May for cutting November onwards.

Savoy – easily recognisable from their dark blistered leaves. Mainly grown for winter harvest but some varieties mature as early as September and some as late as March.

Sowing & Growing

Cabbages like a fertile, well-draining, moisture retentive, firm soil. The main crop beds should be dug over and firmed a few months before planting. Organic matter should be added during the previous season but not too close to the time of planting.

Seed can be sown either into a seed bed, modules or seed tray all under cover.

Seeds should be sown thinly and thinned out to 7.5cm as they develop. Germination usually takes 7-12 days. Seedlings are ready for transplanting when they have 5 or 6 leaves. Using a dibber make a hole big enough to accommodate the root ball firming the soil around the plant.

The spacing between plants depends on the end product, for compact heads space at 30cm, 45cm for large heads and only 15cm for spring cabbage to encourage the pointed conical shape. All young seedlings and transplants should be protected from cabbage root fly. The most successful way to do this is with protective discs around the base of the stem, often called ‘collars’.

Keep young plants well watered until established and then only water during dry periods. Keep weeds under control in the beds. Earth up spring and winter cabbages in winter and firm down any which have been loosened by wind and frost.

Harvesting

Harvest spring cabbages from March through to May when the heart is solid throughout. Summer cabbages can be harvested from late June through to October again when the hearts are solid. Winter cabbages harvest from September to March for Savoy types, or November to March for winter cabbages. Red cabbages have a much shorter harvest period of September to the end of November but can be stored through winter by packing in straw. The hardy winter types can be left in the ground for several months and cut as required.

Harvest cabbages by cutting close to ground level with a kitchen knife, if you cut a cross on the stump a secondary crop of small cabbages can appear from the cut surface.

Common Problems

Cabbage Root Fly

Cabbage Caterpillars



Birds (especially pigeons)
Slugs & Snails
Club Root
Downey Mildew
White Blister
Black Rot
Leaf Spot
Heartless Cabbages
Split Hearts

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.