

GARDENING WITH KALE

Kale is an easy, fun and delicious way to start off or finish with the gardening season. Add it to salads, saute it, or bake to make kale chips. Yummy!

WHAT IS KALE?

Kale is a leafy vegetable that loves cool weather. While we might think of kale as being similar to lettuce or other leafy vegetables, it is actually a member of the same family as cabbage, brussel sprouts and cauliflower.

Family: Brassicacea



The kale that we see in the grocery store is usually green, but it also comes in other colors like purple, red and even white.

WHEN TO PLANT

- Because kale loves cold weather, it can be grown as both an early spring crop and a late summer crop.
- Kale seeds can be sown directly into the ground or started inside 4-6 weeks before you would plant outside by using a seed starter kit.
- If planting in the spring, the kale should be planted 3-5 weeks before the last frost of the season.
- if planting in the late summer, the kale can be be planted 6-8 weeks before the first frost of the season.
- **TIP:** a bit of frost can help to sweeten the flavor of kale so planting in the late summer often produces sweeter tasting kale.
- Seeds, which can be purchased online, at a gardening store, or at some hardware stores.
- Garden bed or, if space is limited, a container with holes in it like a large plastic bucket.
- If starting from seeds indoors, a seed starting kit can be purchased at the same places as the seeds.
- Soil and a fertilizer such as compost
- Water.

STARTING INDOORS

1. Using a seed starting kit, fill up each section with seed starting mix and make sure that it is moist before continuing.
2. Poke two holes 1/4 of an inch deep in each cell. Place a few seeds in each hole and cover with more mix. Place in a window that gets a lot of light and continue to water so that the soil stays moist.
3. Once seedlings are a few inches high (about 2 weeks), choose the strongest and remove the others.



After 4-6 more weeks, your kale should be ready to plant outdoors.

MOVING SEEDLINGS OUTDOORS

- Kale should be introduced slowly to the outdoors so that it is not shocked by the change in temperature.
- Over a period of about five days, place the plant outside for a few hours in the late afternoon. Each day, leave them outside a few hours longer until they are outside for the whole day.
- When they are ready to be planted, dig holes in the garden or container 12 inches apart.
- Place one plant in each hole, cover with soil, then water.

PLANTING

STARTING OUTDOORS

1. If using a bed, make small rows about 12 inches apart and about a 1/4 of an inch deep.
2. If using a large bucket or other container, space the holes so that they are about 12 inches apart.
3. Sprinkle seeds into the rows or holes and cover with soil. Water.
4. Once seedlings have formed and are a few inches high, pick the strongest and remove the weaker plants. If using a bed do this every 12 inches. If using a bucket, pick the strongest in each hole.

CARE AND HARVESTING

- Water so the soil stays moist, but not soggy.
- Kale is hearty, but if temperatures drop into the low 20s, cover with a sheet to protect from freezing.
- Kale is ready to be harvested after about 60 days.
- Leaves can be taken without killing the plant. Cut leaves from the base of the plant using scissors, or snap them off with your fingers.

COMMON TYPES OF KALE

CURLY KALE



This is kale that you usually see in the grocery store. It can be used in salads soups and many other recipes.

DINOSAUR KALE



This kale is a dark greenish blue with slender leaves. Frost makes it extra sweet.

ORNAMENTAL KALE



This kale comes in a variety of colors. It can be eaten, but it is bitter and can be a bit rough. It is mostly used as a garnish for color and presentation.