

## How to grow kale, cabbage, broccoli, turnips and other cole crops

Plant now--no need to wait for warmer weather

**Light** Grows best in full sun, but will tolerate partial shade as well.

**Soil** It needs well-drained, fertile soil to grow fast and produce tender leaves. Enrich the soil with compost and fertilizer before setting out the seedlings. If you choose not to do a soil test, work nitrogen-rich amendments such as blood meal, cottonseed meal, or composted manure into the ground before planting. You probably won't have to add additional nitrogen fertilizer after this initial application.

**Spacing** 18 to 24 inches apart

**Water** even supply of water, about 1 to 1.5 inches per week. You can measure how much water rain has provided by using a rain gauge in the garden. Or you can use your finger as a hydrometer--dig your finger about 2-3 inches into the soil. If it's dry, water thoroughly. If possible don't water from overhead--help prevent leaf disease by using drip irrigation or soaker hoses

**Mulch** Use compost, herbicide-free grass clippings, finely ground leaves, weed-free hay, straw, pine needles, or finely ground bark to keep the soil cool and moist and to keep down weeds.

**Problems:** Aphids, cabbage maggot, flea beetles, imported cabbageworm, loopers, thrips, clubroot, downy mildew. Search WSU's Hortsense and search for: [broccoli, cole crops] (without the brackets) then click GO  
<http://hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu>

### When to harvest:

Broccoli – Harvest before the buds separate or show color. Cut center heads while the buds are still tight. After the center head is cut, smaller side shoots develop which will extend the harvest season up to a month or more. Harvesting the side shoots will keep the plants producing until the weather becomes too warm and causes bolting.

Cabbage – Heads are usable as soon as they are fairly firm. Heads will split if over mature. Cutting just under the head to leave some basal leaves may cause small lateral heads to develop as a bonus.

Cauliflower – For pure white heads, tie outer leaves together as soon as the head reaches a diameter of 2-3 inches. Examine the heads every few days to determine when to tie and harvest. Harvest when compact and fairly smooth; bud segments should not be allowed to separate.

Collards – Harvest by cutting the entire plant or cut the bottom leaves periodically leaving the central growing point to produce more leaves. Do not damage the bud or production will be slowed or halted completely.

This growing guide is provided by the WSU Extension Master Gardeners of Cowlitz County.

Please call our FREE Plant and Insect Clinic 360-577-3014 Ext. 8 to help you with any questions you may have with your garden. You may also submit questions and images on our website: [cowlitzcomg.com/plant-and-insect-clinic](http://cowlitzcomg.com/plant-and-insect-clinic)

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