

## Redbor Kale

Anna Timmerman, BFA, Assistant Horticulture Agent, LSU AgCenter

Jeb S. Fields, Ph.D., Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, LSU AgCenter, Hammond Research Station

### Redbor Kale

(*Brassica oleracea* 'Redbor')

- **Recommended Use:** Cool-season bedding plant, edible landscaping
- **Exposure:** Full sun (Eight hours of direct sunlight recommended)
- **Size:** Height: 30 inches; width: 12 to 16 inches
- **Habit:** Upright
- **Growth Time:** Cool-season annual
- **Maintenance Category:** Low maintenance
- **Water Use:** Average to low
- **Highlights:** Easy to grow. Colorful foliage. Edible and ornamental.



Young Redbor kale exhibiting a deep purple color and the unique eye-catching texture.

### Summary

Redbor kale delivers a dramatic display of red-purple foliage, adding visual interest when paired with such cool-season blooming annuals as dianthus and violas. Its leaves are frilled and cleaved, providing a unique texture to a garden that highlights surrounding plantings. Redbor kale is also the first edible Louisiana Super Plant, and it boasts a flavor identical to store-bought kale varieties. Plant Redbor kale seeds or transplants in the fall so that you can enjoy it throughout the cool season. Redbor kale is extremely cold tolerant and can handle a freeze with minimal damage. It can be planted as a background foliage plant or as a colorful focal point in the landscape. Redbor kale can also be planted in large containers using a well-draining, fertile potting soil.

### Requirements

- To start from seed, plant one-quarter to one-half inch deep into fertile potting mix or garden soil and water in. Germination should take place within a week of planting. Plant anytime from October through February.
- Do not plant too close together. Seedlings should be thinned so that one plant remains every 12 to 16 inches. Space transplants 12 to 16 inches apart as well to ensure they have ample room to grow.
- Redbor kale performs best in full sun but will grow in filtered sun.

### Growth Habit

- Spaced correctly, Redbor kale will reach heights of up to 30 inches tall and a width of 16 inches.
- Redbor kale will grow until summer temperatures get too hot, at which point it will bolt or die and should be removed.

## Care and Maintenance

- Ensure proper moisture, especially during drought periods. If possible, drip irrigation at the base of the plant is recommended to reduce foliar wetness. Avoid saturated soils, as this can damage the roots and stress the plant.
- Apply 1 to 2 inches of mulch around the base of the plants to keep weed pressures down.
- A complete or balanced general-purpose fertilizer will suffice. Fertilize by side-dressing in February to keep it healthy through the spring months.
- The addition of organic matter into the bed (compost, peat moss, composted manure or soil conditioner) is extremely beneficial to Redbor kale and will help ensure proper soil texture and provide some soil nutrition.
- Redbor kale is susceptible to pests, such as aphids and various caterpillars. Control caterpillars by applying Spinosad or products containing Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*). Control aphids with insecticidal soap, neem oil or ultrafine horticultural oil.
- Redbor kale is susceptible to fungal and bacterial diseases associated with cole crops. Proper cultural management, such as plant spacing, bed preparation and watering, will help to ensure that Redbor kale stays healthy.



*Mature Redbor kale with more green color expressed.*

- Redbor kale can be harvested and prepared in the same manner as other kale varieties traditionally grown in the vegetable garden. Harvest the larger, outer leaves and cook using your favorite kale recipe.
- Try growing Redbor kale behind more compact cool-season bedding plants so you can harvest the lower leaves as it grows taller throughout the season.
- Deadheading is not required.
- Deer and rabbit resistant.

For more information on Redbor kale and other Louisiana Super Plants, contact your local LSU AgCenter extension office or visit [LSUAgCenter.com/SuperPlants](http://LSUAgCenter.com/SuperPlants).



William B. Richardson, LSU Vice President for Agriculture  
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center  
Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station  
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service  
LSU College of Agriculture

P3707F (online) 4/20

The LSU AgCenter and LSU provide equal opportunities in programs and employment.

Visit our website: [www.lsuagcenter.com](http://www.lsuagcenter.com)