

# BRUSSELS SPROUTS

*James E. Boudreaux, Kathryn Fontenot and Charles Johnson*

Brussels sprouts are the most unique cole crop that can be grown in the garden. The sprouts are miniature cabbage heads that are produced on the upright growing stem of a collard-like plant. It is the slowest growing member of the cole crops, taking 80-100 days or more from transplanting to harvest. Brussels sprouts are a hardy plant that can withstand temperatures into the low 20s.

Brussels sprouts can be transplanted in the garden from August through October for harvest in late November, December, January and February.



It takes six-eight weeks to produce Brussels sprouts transplants. Brussels sprouts can be planted from container plants as well as bare-rooted transplants. (See the section on transplants for more information on making Brussels sprouts transplants.)

Brussels sprouts develop into large plants and need to be planted in a single line down the row with the plants spaced 12-18 inches apart to provide sufficient space for growth. Many gardeners stake the plants to prevent them from falling. Try to locate the slow-growing Brussels sprouts on the edge of the garden to prevent interference with general spring garden preparation.

Brussels sprouts require larger amounts of fertilizer than the other cole crops because of their slow growth. For preplant fertilizer, use 0.5-0.6 pounds of 8-24-24 or 13-13-13 per 10-foot row. Side-dress three times with 1-1.2 cups of calcium nitrate per 10-foot row. Apply the first side-dressing four-five weeks after planting or when the largest leaves are 2-4 inches wide. Apply the second three to four weeks after the first side-dressing and apply the third three to four weeks after the second.

Brussels sprouts are an excellent crop to be planted on plastic mulch and drip tube left over from a spring crop. Side-dressing also can be done by injecting the fertilizer through the drip line by using an injection device starting 3 to 4 weeks after planting and continued for eight to nine weeks. (See the sections on drip irrigation and fertigation.)

Brussels sprouts can be harvested once the sprouts reach a diameter of 1½-2½ inches and are firm to the touch. The lower sprouts can be snapped from the plant, leaving the smaller sprouts to develop. A single planting of Brussels sprouts can be picked for six-eight weeks. Brussels sprouts are highly perishable and should be refrigerated soon after cutting.

The biggest insect problems with Brussels sprouts are aphids and worms. Look for worms and aphids once the leaves are 2-4 inches across.

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## Recommended Brussels sprouts varieties

### **OPEN POLLINATED**

Jade Cross E

Long Island Improved

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# CABBAGE

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Cabbage can be grown for six months in Louisiana gardens through the fall, winter and spring. It is a hardy plant, making it a valuable fresh vegetable that gardeners can enjoy during the winter months.

Cabbage can be transplanted from August through early March. The crop transplanted in August, September and October is ready to harvest in November and December. Cabbage transplanted in early September will be ready for New Year's. Transplants set out in November and early December will be ready to harvest in late February, March and April – the winter crop. Those set out in January and February will be ready in late March to early May – the spring crop.

It takes five-six weeks to produce cabbage transplants. Cabbage can be planted from container plants as well as bare-rooted transplants. (See section on transplants.)

Cabbage head size is controlled by plant spacing. A 10- to 12-inch spacing produces 3- to 4-pound heads and a 16- to 18-inch spacing yields 5- to 7-pound heads. Two drills (spaced 12 inches apart) of transplants can be planted on one row.

All of the recommended varieties are hybrid. They have uniform growth and maturity and more vigor than the open-pollinated varieties. Many varieties have an attractive blue-green that stands out in the garden. They also have a sweet taste and do not have the strong cabbage smell while cooking. Varieties recommended for winter production are cold hardy and resistant to bolting (premature seed stalk development). Varieties recommended in the spring are adapted to warm weather and resistant/tolerant to black rot (bacterial disease) and tip burn (calcium deficiency).

Planting varieties with different maturities will spread out the harvest from one planting.

For preplant fertilizer, use 0.5-0.6 pounds (1-1.2 cups) of 8-24-24 or 13-13-13 per 10-foot row. Side-dress three times with 0.75 cup (6 ounce) of calcium nitrate per 10-foot row. Apply the first side-dressing three to four weeks after planting or when the largest leaves are 2-4 inches wide. Apply the second 10-14 days after the first side-dressing and apply the third 10-14 days after the second. Red cabbage varieties require higher nitrogen rates to make good size heads. A fourth side-dressing 10-14 days after the third is recommended on red cabbage.



Cabbage also can be grown on plastic mulch and drip irrigation left over from a crop in the spring. Side-dressing can be done by injecting the fertilizer through the drip line by using an injection device. One cup (½ pound) of calcium nitrate per 100-foot row per week is injected starting three to four weeks after planting and continued for eight-nine weeks. (See the section on drip irrigation and fertigation.)

Cabbage can be harvested when the heads are firm. A mature head will not yield when pressed with the thumb. The edge of the top leaf on a mature head will curl back slightly. Mature cabbage heads will hold in the field for several weeks.

The most common problems on cabbage are worms and aphids. Treating worms and aphids as soon as you see them is the key to controlling these pests.

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## Recommended cabbage varieties

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### FALL CROP

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Bravo – medium-late

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Rio Verde – medium-late

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Cheers – medium

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Emblem – medium

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Vantage Point – medium-late

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Royal Vantage – medium-late

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### WINTER CROP

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Bravo – medium-late

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Rio Verde – medium-late

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### SPRING CROP

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Bravo – medium-late