



Growing Brassicas in the Low Desert

Brassica Facts

- Family: Brassicaceae (Mustard or cruciferous family) Cross pollinating over centuries has created a wide variety of vegetables from one single ancestor, a wild cabbage.
- Cool-season crops
- Nutrient-dense superfoods rich in vitamins A, C, and K, high in antioxidants

1. Timing:

- Ideal planting time is late Sept- December or when soil temp is 75 degrees or lower
- For late Fall harvest, start seeds indoors in the late Summer (August)

2. Location

- Choose a location that receives at least 6 hours of sun
- Not enough sun will result in under-developed crowns
- Space 18-24" apart at a minimum. Most brassicas grow large (up to 36" tall)

3. Soil

- Brassicas are considered heavy feeders and require fertile soil to grow into their full mature size
- Add 3-4" of fresh compost, then sprinkle in worm castings while planting. Top off with a thin layer of mulch
- Feed worm castings again in 4-6 weeks. BSFL Nutrient + can also be applied to the soil to boost health and development

4. Water

- Drip irrigation system is best to avoid moisture on leaves. Excess moisture on leaves can be harmful by creating breeding zones for insects and fungal disease.
- Watering every other day for about 15 mins or about 1.5" of water is ideal in a raised bed. This will vary depending on the depth of your bed.

5. Companion Plants

- Herbs such as Rosemary, sage, and dill
- Alliums (garlic and onions) to act as a natural deterrent

6. Common Pests

- Cabbage loopers, aphids and whiteflies
- Manual removal is best for the cabbage loopers but BT Spray can also be used
- Proper spacing to allow enough sunlight and circulation in

7. Pruning

- All brassicas benefit from normal removal of lower leaves, all damaged foliage and/ or any leaves touching the soil surface.
- Removing lower leaves directs energy into developing crowns and sprouts faster

8. Harvesting

- Broccolis and Cauliflower - when head is full and compact, before it begins to flower
- Cabbage- When heads are firm, squeeze gently
- Brussel Sprouts- be patient, they take a long time (about 4 mos) sprouts should be firm and right 1.5" in diameter
- Kale- harvest outer leaves only to keep the plant producing
- Cauliflower sometimes need leaves to cover the crowns (self blanching varieties do not) This prevents it from turning purple and bolting