



# Cabbage Tip Sheet

## Cabbage

Family: Brassicaceae (Mustard)  
Season: Cool  
Ease of growing: Fairly easy  
Nutrient needs: High  
Water needs: Moderate  
Common propagation: Transplant

## Seed facts

Germination temperature: 45°F to 85°F  
Germination time: 4 to 20 days  
Viability: 3 to 10 years

## Transplants

Weeks to grow transplants: 4 to 6  
Start: March to May  
Plant out: April (early crop) to early-July (late crop).

## Planning facts

Typical spacing: 12" x 24"; 15" x 36"  
Square foot per plant: 1 to 2  
Time to harvest: 60 to 95 days from transplant

## Variety selection

The many types of cabbage may be divided into two general groups: loose-heading and hard-heading. They vary in color from dark green and red to white. Most Michigan gardeners grow or purchase transplants. They are usually advertised as early, midseason or late varieties. Some varieties are better for fresh consumption and others are more suited to long-term storage. Most have smooth leaves except for Savoy types—these have crinkly leaves and contain higher amounts of iron. Ornamental cabbages used in flower beds and other areas of the landscape have loose heads or ruffled leaves that

add an interesting touch to the annual garden. They are edible, too.

## Preparation and planting

Cabbage grows well under Michigan's cool conditions. It withstands temperatures down to 20°F. The plant thrives in most soils as long as adequate moisture is available. Follow soil test recommendations when adding nutrients.

## Care

Shallow cultivation is necessary to prevent root damage. Cabbage is shallow rooted and usually requires irrigation, but is more drought tolerant than broccoli. It's important to apply moisture evenly late in the season, otherwise developing heads may split. Avoid late evening overhead watering, as this tends to encourage diseases such as black rot and downy mildew. Adding N fertilizer six to eight weeks after transplanting is common for this heavy feeder, especially if a lot of rain has fallen.

## Major pests

**Insects:** Aphids, flea-beetles, cabbage maggots, imported cabbage worm, cabbage loopers, diamondback moth.

**Diseases:** Black rot, downy mildew, alternaria.

## Harvesting and storage

Harvest cabbage when the head is firm and has reached an acceptable size. Cabbages not harvested when ready are subject to head splitting. You can slow this process by twisting the heads or slicing the roots. For the best flavor, eat soon after picking. However, under proper conditions (32°F; 95 percent humidity) cabbage can be stored for up to six months with little loss in quality. Do not store cabbage with ethylene generators such as apples.

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