How to Plant, Grow, and Harvest Kale

**How to Plant Kale**

Plant seeds at about \( \frac{1}{4} \) in. to \( \frac{1}{2} \) in. depth and loosely cover with soil. Plants should be spaced about 12 to 18 inches apart in the garden. Kale seeds typically germinate within a week.

**Where to Plant Kale**

Kale prefers moist, fertile soil that drains well. Select a spot in full or partial sunlight and consider adding compost to your soil before planting. Like other members of the Brassica family, kale is a “heavy feeder”, meaning it absorbs a lot of nutrients from the soil. Rotate kale throughout your garden each year and avoid planting it where other Brassica plants were recently growing.

**When to Plant Kale**

Kale is a cooler season crop that does best when grown in the spring and fall. For an October harvest of full-size kale, start seeds indoors in August and transplant into the garden in September. For an October harvest of baby kale, plant in September.

**Carrying for Your Kale Plants**

Keep the area around your plants well-weeded. Periodically pick off yellowing or unhealthy looking leaves and check for pests.

You (or your students) can remove pests by hand or a strong stream of water. Ladybugs and lacewings eat aphids and parasitic wasps eat loopers, so let them be if you see them.

**How to Harvest Kale**

Kale reaches its full size after about two months. Smaller, tender leaves, often referred to as baby kale, can be harvested after 3 to 4 weeks.

Harvest the lowest, outermost leaves first. Gently tear the leaf from right where it meets the stem. Always leave a few of the central leaves, so that you can harvest again later. Dunk the leaves in cold water immediately after harvesting and store them in a refrigerator. Shake or pat dry.

**Companion Planting**

Companion plants assist in the growth of other plants. Plants of the Brassica family like growing near Alliums and aromatic plants, such as garlic, onions, and fragrant herbs. Kale also grows well with potatoes, beets, celery, chard, spinach, marigolds, and nasturtiums. Consider planting some of these friends of kale in your garden.

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