

Growing Cabbages Around Alice Springs

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VARIETIES

There are many varieties of cabbage that grow well in Alice Springs. Both late-maturing and early-maturing types are available. For current varieties, contact local nurseries.

PLANTING SEASON

Cabbages can be planted from January through to September. Avoid planting late-maturing varieties towards the end of the season.

SOIL PREPARATION

Dig the soil up to 60 cm deep and add as much compost or animal manure as possible. Cabbages are heavy feeders and benefit from a lot of decomposed organic matter. Rake over the bed to break the clods, then level and firm it down ready for planting.

FERTILISER

Although there are many different types of fertilisers in the market, a complete granular NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) fertiliser is recommended. On most soils apply before, or at sowing, either broadcast and dug in, or in bands about 5 cm deep to one side of the proposed planting.

In areas where vegetables have been grown for sometime, sulphate of potash may also be required at planting time.

Urea should be applied three times during the growing season.

Avoid putting fertiliser, other than foliar fertiliser, on the leaves of plants. **Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations when applying fertilisers.**

PLANTING

Cabbage can be sown direct, but is usually sown in seed-beds, cell-trays, or individual peat pellets (or pots) and transplanted out when 5 to 10 cm high. Plants should be spaced 50 cm apart with rows 75 to 100 cm apart. Seedlings should be hardened-off before planting out.

Hardening-off can be done by restricting the water to the plant for several days and exposing the seedlings to more sunlight.



The seedlings should be watered well a couple of hours before transplanting. In hot weather they should be shaded for a few days after planting out. Try to keep as much soil as possible around the roots when removing seedlings from the seed-bed. The planting hole should be made deep enough to take the full depth of the roots and the soil should be pressed firmly onto them. The seedlings should be watered immediately after transplanting.

WATERING

Watering with a watering-can may be necessary each day for several days after planting, especially during warm weather. Water requirement will vary from about 15 mm (15L/m²) every second day for new plantings in summer to 70 to 75 mm (70 to 75 L/m²) every seven days for well-developed plants in summer.

Cabbages have a moderate salt tolerance and can be watered with water with over 1 000 mg/L total dissolved salts (TDS). Leaf-wetting during the day should be avoided with water over 500 mg/LTDS. All types of irrigation are suitable for watering cabbages. Drip irrigation can save water if managed properly.

MANAGEMENT

Mulching between plants is recommended. Special attention should be given for aphid and caterpillar control. Caterpillars can be picked off and spraying with horticultural soaps or oils can control aphids. Weeds should be controlled in the garden, especially those that can host aphids.

INSECT CONTROL

The use of pesticides is restricted. Check with the Entomology Section of DPIFM for appropriate chemical control, or refer to www.pestinfo.nt.gov.au.

HARVESTING

The smaller, early-maturing varieties are ready to pick in 10 weeks after transplanting; others can take up to 20 weeks. Weights vary from 1.5 kg for smaller types to 5 kg for the biggest. Green Coronet can be harvested when small or allowed to mature to its full 4 kg. It will hold well after maturity, making it an ideal variety for the home gardener.

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