

Harvest of the Month at Home

Brassicas



Did You Know

- “Brassica” is a genus, or group of closely related plants in the mustard family. There are 3700+ species of Brassicaceae, or the Brassica plant family, ranging from cauliflower to kohlrabi. There are several subcategories of Brassicas known as “cole crops” or cruciferous vegetables. Several of these vegetables were derived from the same ancestor, wild mustard or *Brassica oleracea*. This includes: broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, Brussels sprouts, and others. See the illustration below.
- Brassicas are diverse and depending on the variety, we eat different parts of the plant: roots, stems, leaves, flowers, and seeds.
- Many of the Brassicas that we enjoy as food today either originated in northwest Europe or the Mediterranean but over the past 2,000 years, Brassicas were most likely domesticated in the Mediterranean region. The ancient Greeks recorded medicinal and culinary uses of Brassicas.
- Cabbage, a popular Brassica grown in Montana, has roughly 400 varieties. Although they all share certain structural features and properties, cabbage varieties vary greatly in shape, size and color. Look for purple, green, and white cabbages!

Gardening

Brassicas are a perfect addition to any Montana garden! They enjoy cooler weather and can be planted as early as April in Montana. Cabbages take 50 to 100 days to mature. The right timing and temperature are imperative for healthy, flavorful, and beautiful Brassicas. Here are some special considerations when planting Brassicas:

- Because some Brassicas can be susceptible to pests, it is important to cover cabbages, broccoli, and cauliflower with row covers.
- Be sure to pick a sunny spot when planting, as Brassicas need at least 5 hours of sun daily but prefer full sun.
- All Brassicas grow best in firm, fertile, free-draining soil, so be sure to amend your garden with compost when growing these diverse crops.
- Rotating Brassica crops with other crops will help avoid a buildup of pests or diseases particular to one plant family. It will also help balance the nutrients being used, as Brassicas require nutrient-dense soil to grow well.

Buying Tips

When selecting Brassicas, it is important to make sure the vegetable is dense and firm. Avoid Brassicas that are limp, discolored, or bruised.

Cooking

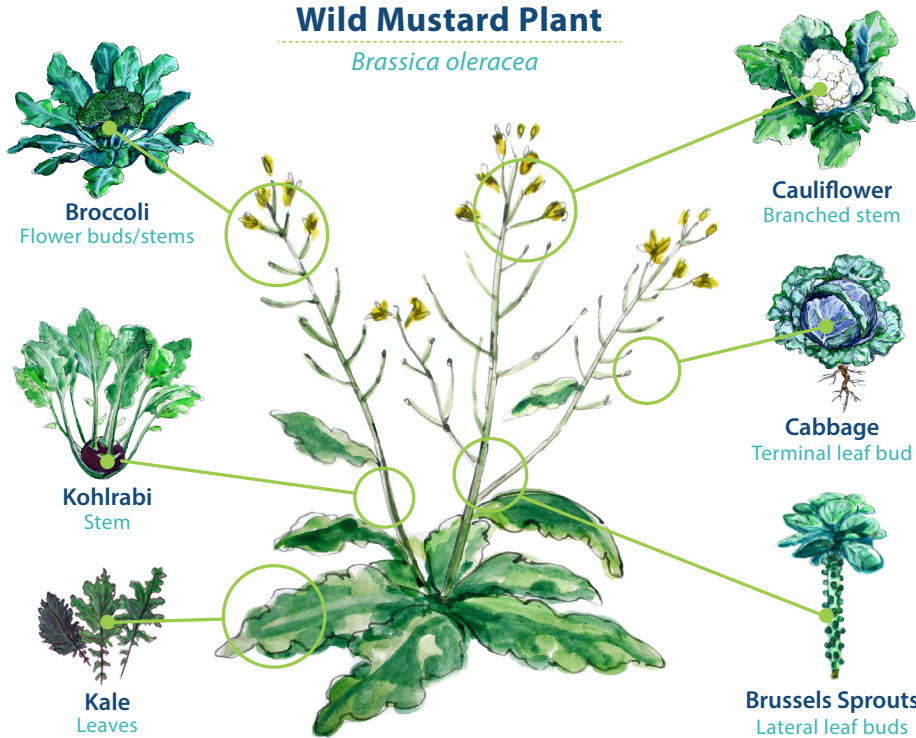
Fresh. Many Brassicas are delicious served raw. Broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage are tasty options that require little preparation. Shredding those Brassicas create a dynamic component to any salad.

Frozen. Brassicas can be stored frozen for up to 1 year after being blanched. To blanch Brassicas, briefly boil the prepared vegetables until the leaves are slightly soft and then dunk in ice water.

Steamed. Steaming can be a great solution for some Brassicas, including collards, cauliflower, and broccoli. Boil about an inch of water in a pot then add the trimmed and cleaned vegetable in

Wild Mustard Plant

Brassica oleracea



a steamer basket over the boiling water. Cover and steam until tender to bite, about 3-5 minutes.

Roasted. Roasting Brassicas is a delicious option to add flavor and accentuate the texture of the vegetables. Kale, Brussels sprouts, and turnips are delicious when tossed with oil and seasoning then roasted in the oven. Kale can be roasted or dehydrated to make tasty kale chips!

Fermented. Making sauerkraut is an excellent way to enjoy a bounty of cabbage throughout the year! Visit https://store.msuxextension.org/Products/Canning-Pickles-and-Sauerkraut__MT200902HR.aspx to learn how to ferment this Brassica.

Preserved. For information on preserving Brassicas, look for Extension MontGuides on Home Canning Pressures and Processing Time. Visit www.msuxextension.org/nutrition and click on the food preservation link or contact your Extension Office.

Recipe

Winter Vegetable Soup with Noodles

Developed by: Vermont FEED New School Cuisine Cookbook

Servings

6

Ingredients

3 cups Kale, collard greens, or Swiss chard

3 cups Carrots

3/4 cup Onions

1 tsp Vegetable oil

1 Tbsp Garlic, *chopped*

1 cup Butternut squash, *peeled, seeded, diced in 1/2 in pieces*

1/4 cup Turnips, *peeled and diced in 1/2 in pieces*

3 qt Water

1/4 lb Egg noodles, *whole-grain*

1/4 cup Green lentils, *dry/uncooked*

3/4 Tbsp Chicken bouillon

1/4 tsp Black pepper, *ground*

1 tsp Salt, *Kosher*



Preparation

1. Remove tough ribs from the greens. Cut into 1/2 inch pieces.
2. Trim and peel carrots and onions. Cut into 1/2 inch dice.
3. Heat oil in a large stockpot over medium heat. Add onion, garlic, and half of the salt. Cook, stir occasionally, until browned for 10-15 minutes.
4. Add carrots, squash, and turnips.
5. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender for 10-15 minutes.
6. Meanwhile, bring some water to a boil in a pot. Cook pasta until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and set aside.
7. Bring a half cup of water, lentils, and 1/4 of the salt to a boil in a large saucepan. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook until tender, about 30 minutes. Drain and set aside.
8. When the vegetables are tender, add the rest of the water, the rest of the salt, chicken base, and pepper to the pot. Bring to a simmer and cook for 20 minutes.
9. Add the greens and cook until just tender, about 5 minutes. Add the drained lentils.
10. To serve, add the cooked noodles right to individual serving bowls and ladle soup over top, or stir cooked noodles into the pot of soup.

Book Nook

Katie's Cabbage, by Katie Stagliano

The Trouble with Cauliflower, by Jane Sutton

Brussels Sprouts For Breakfast, by Rhonda Herrington Bulmer and Kent Bulmer

Alex McGreen and the Tale of the Mysterious Kale, by Rayna R Andrews

The Turnip, by Jan Brett

Oh Joy, Bok Choy & Other Greens for Me!, by Dawn Noelle Archer



2 Montana Harvest of the Month: Brassicas



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana schools and communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, the National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, Montana Department of Agriculture, Montana Organic Association, and FoodCorps Montana. More information and resources are available at: mtharvestofthemonth.org.

Funds were provided in part by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funding and Montana Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The Montana State University Extension Service is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach.