

Home Gardening Series  
**Chinese Cabbage**

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Vegetables

**Environment**

**Light** – sunny  
**Soil** – well-drained  
**Fertility** – medium to rich  
**pH** – 5.8 to 7.5  
**Temperature** – cool season  
**Moisture** – moist

**Culture**

**Planting** – transplant  
**Spacing** – 12-18 x 36 inches  
**Hardiness** – hardy biennial  
**Fertilizer** – medium feeder

**Chinese Cabbage –  
*Brassica pekinensis*,  
*Brassica chinensis***

Chinese cabbage is indigenous to China, where it has been cultivated since 500 A.D. Its name is quite misleading; Chinese cabbage is more closely related to turnips and rutabagas than any sort of cabbage.

Chinese cabbage (also known as celery cabbage, Napa and Wong Bok) is grown in Arkansas mostly in the fall. Its mild flavor is similar to that of celery and cabbage (although Chinese cabbage is not related to celery), and its leaves are thinner and more delicate than those of cabbage. Unfortunately, many gardeners do not consider growing



Chinese cabbage as a salad vegetable due to failure of spring sowing to form desirable heads.

**Cultural Practices**

**Planting Time**

For best head development, it is important not to interrupt growth. Since Chinese cabbage seedlings are more sensitive to transplanting than cabbage seedlings, the plants are best started in individual containers (peat pellets, pots, etc.) for spring planting. Transplant two to three weeks before the last frost-free date and before the plants are too old (four to five weeks). Sowing seed directly in the garden may not allow enough time for the seedlings to grow before warm summer days stimulate seedstalk formation, bolting, and the plant is useless.

Chinese cabbage develops best during cool weather and is an excellent vegetable for fall gardeners. Start seed in early to midsummer and transplant at the same time as late cabbage.

**Spacing and Depth of Planting**

Space plants 12 inches apart for upright varieties such as Michihli and 15 to 24 inches apart for the larger heading types. For fall planting, transplant or sow seed directly in the garden 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep. Keep the soil moist and thin seedlings with care. If possible, start seed in a protected place and transplant on a cloudy day. Use a starter fertilizer solution when transplanting.

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## Cultivars

Crop	Variety	Days to Maturity	Plants/ 100 Ft of Row	Sources (see "Sources" paragraph below)	Remarks
Chinese Cabbage					
Napa Type	China Pride Hybrid	64	100	32	Best for fall planting.
	Blues Hybrid	65	100	6	Best for spring and early summer.
Michihli	Jade Pagoda Hybrid	72	100	9	Best for fall planting, widely adapted, high yields.

## Care

Treat Chinese cabbage as you would cabbage. Maintain sufficient soil moisture to keep the plants growing vigorously; side-dress with nitrogen fertilizer when the plants are half grown.

## Sources

For a list of sources referred to by number, request FSA6106, *Seed Sources: Vegetable and Herb*, for current address, telephone and web site.

## Harvesting

Closely related members of the Chinese vegetables are Bok choy and Pak choy which develop long, loose, dark green leaves. Pe-tsai type forms moderately firm one- to three-pound heads. The blanched inner leaves resemble lettuce. They are crisp, delicate in flavor and an excellent salad green. Tah Tsai is a non-heading Chinese cabbage that looks like endive or escarole.

Cut the entire plant at ground line when the heads are compact and firm. Harvest before the seedstalks form in early summer and before hard freezing temperatures in the fall.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Why does my Chinese cabbage fail to form a good head in the spring? Instead, it sends up an early seedstalk.**

A. Chinese cabbage quickly goes to seed during warm summer days. Dry weather accelerates the process. For best results, choose early varieties, start plants in individual containers and transplant after the last hard frost in the spring. Late spring seeded Chinese cabbage will also go to seed.

**Q. What is "Chinese cabbage" and how is it different from regular cabbage?**

A. Chinese cabbage describes several greens which differ considerably. Like cabbage, they are cool-season crops and bolt or go to seed in long days of late spring and summer. They grow best as a fall or early winter crop in most areas of Arkansas. Cultural practices are the same as for regular cabbage, although Chinese cabbage matures quicker and may be ready in as few as 60 to 65 days from seeding. Chinese cabbage is used fresh in salads or cooked like regular cabbage.