

## Home Gardening Series

# Kale

Craig R. Andersen  
Extension Horticulturist -  
Vegetables

### Environment

**Light** – sunny  
**Soil** – well-drained  
**Fertility** – medium-rich  
**pH** – 5.6 to 7.0  
**Temperature** – cool  
**Moisture** – moist

### Culture

**Planting** – direct seed, spring or fall  
**Spacing** – 2-6 x 24 inches, thin  
**Hardiness** – cool-season biennial  
**Fertilizer** – medium

### Kale – *Brassica oleracea* *acephala*

Kale are cabbage-like plants native to the eastern Mediterranean or to Asia Minor. Their wild forms have become widely distributed from their place of origin and are found on the coasts of northern Europe and Britain. Apparently all the principal forms of kales we know today have been known for at least 2,000 years.

Kale (also known as non-heading cabbage and broccoli) are hardy cool-season greens of the cabbage family rich in vitamins A and C. Although kale tolerates summer heat, it grows best in the spring and fall. The highly curled, bluish-green leaves (some varieties have plain leaves) do not form a solid head.

Flowering varieties of kale are quite colorful. They are planted as an accent or pot plants. The leaves

develop their highest color under cool fall weather. In addition to serving as ornamentals, kale plants are used for greens as a garnish or in salads and may be cooked in place of cabbage.

### Cultural Practices

#### Planting Time

Plant kale any time from early spring to early summer. Planting in late summer provides harvest from fall until the ground freezes hard in winter.

#### Spacing and Depth of Planting

Sow seed 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep in rows. Thin the seedlings to 8 to 12 inches apart. The seedlings may be transplanted.

#### Care

Kale are relatively easy to grow, requiring only normal cultivation and watering. They can be treated like collards or mustard greens.

#### Harvesting

The lower leaves may be individually picked when they are small and tender (8 to 10 inches shorter). The entire kale plant may be cut. Quality is improved by frost, and the plant can withstand light freeze. Late summer planting usually gives best results. Kale can be harvested until a severe freeze in the winter.

*Arkansas Is  
Our Campus*

Visit our web site at:  
<http://www.uaex.edu>

## Cultivars

Crop	Variety	Days to Maturity	Seeds/ 100 Ft of Row	Disease Resistance or Tolerance	Sources (see "Sources" paragraph below)	Remarks
Kale	Vates	55	1/4 oz		5, 6, 9, 32, 35	Deeply curled, blue-green leaves, hardy, slow bolting, does not yellow in cold weather.
	Red Russian	40	1/4 oz		4, 9, 30, 31	Red leaves, early crop, tender.
	Improved Dwarf Siberian	58	1/4 oz		2, 6, 32, 33	Hardy, heat tolerant, blue-green leaves with frilled edges, bushy.
	Winterbor	52	1/4 oz		2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 27, 32	Vates-like leaves, tall, frost tolerant.

## Sources

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

## Q. Are ornamental kales edible?

A. Yes, they are edible but are more highly valued for their ornamental value.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. Will new leaves develop if the small leaves at the center of the plants are removed?

A. No. Removing the apical meristem prevents further growth.

---

**DR. CRAIG R. ANDERSEN** is Extension horticulturist - vegetables, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.