

Organic Brussels Sprouts:

Growing and Seed Saving Information



Brussels Sprouts

Brussels Sprouts are a cool season biennial in the *Brassicaceae* family, sharing species name *Brassica oleracea* with cauliflower, cabbage, collards, kale, broccoli, and kohlrabi.

Position

Full sun. Light shade is tolerated but will slow maturity.

Soil and Nutrient Requirements

Brussels sprouts love a rich well drained loam. They are heavy feeders; side dress when plants are 12" tall.

Seeding Depth

1/4-1/2"

Seeding Rate

3 seeds/18"

Plant Spacing

18-24"

Row Spacing

30-36"

When to Sow

Direct seed as soon as ground can be worked or start transplants indoors 4-6 weeks before planting date.

Frost Tolerant

Yes. Brussels Sprouts develop their best flavor and sweetness only after a few frosts.

Drought Tolerant

No. Mulch to keep plants moist and cool in summer heat.

Heat Tolerant

No.

Seed Specs

80-150M seeds/lb (112M avg.). M=1,000

Seed Coating / Pelleting Info

Some of the varieties we carry receive an organic film coating applied to the seed, which make the seed easier to see during planting.

Harvest

Sprout formation will begin at the base of the stalk; to encourage development of the upper sprouts for uniform maturity, pinch out the growing tip of the plant in late summer when bottom sprout is as big as an average thumb. Or, harvest sprouts individually from the bottom of the stalk when they are about 1-1.5" in diameter. Fall planted Brussels sprouts will become sweeter after a few light frosts.

Storage

Store at just above freezing, 95% humidity for 3-5 weeks, or keep in freezer.

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Pest Info

- Cabbage looper, imported cabbage worm, and diamondback moth are of the *Lepidoptera* order and can thus be controlled by *Bacillus thuringiensis* (such as Dipel DF, see Supplies) and/or spinosad (such as Entrust™), preferentially in rotation with one another to prevent selection of resistant individuals (check with your certifier before applying).
- Protect plants from flea beetles by using floating row covers in the early season.
- Root maggots can be controlled by applying beneficial nematodes.

Disease Info

- Black rot (*Xanthomonas campestris pv. campestris*) first appears as V-shaped, yellow lesions at leaf margin. Infected plants should be pulled up immediately, and plantings should never be worked during wet conditions.
- Fusarium yellows, caused by the bacteria *Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. conglutinan*, manifests as yellowing of the lower leaves 2-4 weeks after transplanting. Yellowing moves to upper leaves and ultimately causes wilt.
- Fungal diseases can be prevented by spraying with copper hydroxide (such as Champion WP™ and/or oxidate (such as Storox™), but are best prevented by production practices that build soil and promote vigorous plant growth.
- Clubroot is a soil borne disease which stunts the roots of the plants so that they are not able to develop normally. Rotate crops and add lime to raise soil pH to 7.2.

Seed Saving Instructions

An insect pollinated biennial, Brussels sprouts will cross with all members of Brassica oleracea. Isolation distances of ½ mile are necessary for purity, unless alternate day caging is used. In northern areas, it is difficult to keep plants overwinter for their second, seedbearing year. Seedpods must reach maturity on the mother plant. When pods are dry and brown, they can be harvested and broken open. Black rot, black leg and black leaf spot are seedborne diseases. Hot water treatment can reduce transmission.