

Organic Kohlrabi :

Growing and Seed Saving Information



Types of Kohlrabi

Kohlrabi is a cool season biennial in the *Brassicaceae* family, sharing species name *Brassica oleracea* with cauliflower, cabbage, collards, kale, brussels sprouts, and broccoli. Kohlrabi is a little known, yet delightful vegetable with mild flavor and the texture of a juicy, sweet radish. The edible portion of kohlrabi is not the root, but rather the round, swollen stem of the plant. Leaves are also edible. Kohlrabi varies in color from light green to purple.

Soil and Nutrient Requirements

Requires well drained soil with pH 6.0-7.5. A general guideline is 2-3 lbs of 8-16-16 fertilizer over 100 sq ft of garden area two weeks before planting. If boron is not present in your soils, consider adding 1 Tbs per 100 sq ft.

Position

Full sun to light shade

Seeding Depth

Seed depth: 1/4-1/2"

Seeding Rate

Seeding rate: ~12 seeds/ft

Plant Spacing

Plant spacing: 4"

Row Spacing

Row spacing: 12-18"

When to Sow

Start transplants 4-6 weeks before planting date, or direct seed as soon as ground can be worked in early spring or late summer. Germinates from 45-85 degrees. Best quality is for fall harvest.

Frost Tolerant

Plants will withstand light frost. Freezing temperatures, or a week at 50 degrees, can cause bolting.

Drought Tolerant

Needs plentiful consistent moisture for best quality.

Heat Tolerant

Temperatures in the 60's are preferred, but it can be grown throughout the season in the Northeast.

Seed Specs

5,500-9M seeds/oz (6,500 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

Harvest when stem swells to 3-5" and is easily visible above the soil. Larger plants become woody.

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Storage

With leaves removed, kohlrabi can be stored in the fridge for several weeks.

Pest Info

- Insect pests, including cabbage looper, imported cabbage worm, and diamondback moth, are largely 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, caused by the bacterium *Xanthomonas campestris* and Club root, caused by the soil borne fungus *Plasmidiophora*. Prevention includes resistant varieties, crop rotation, removal or tillage of plant debris, eliminating cruciferous weeds, and handling plants in dry conditions.

Seed Saving Instructions

An insect pollinated biennial, Kohlrabi will cross with all members of *Brassica oleracea*. Dig healthy, solid heads in the fall very carefully and pack roots in damp sawdust. In spring, replant and lightly score an X through the top of the head. The seed stalk will emerge from the center of the head. Isolation distances of ½ mile are necessary for purity, unless alternate day caging is used. 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.