

Brussels sprouts

Brassica oleraceae (Brassicaceae)

Fast Facts:

Acres in Washington: less than 100 acres

Per Acre Value: varies per year

Number of Growers: 25

Percent of U.S. Acreage: less than 1%

Description

Of crop:

Brussels sprouts are in the Brassicaceae family which includes cabbage, collards, broccoli, kale and kohlrabi. They are a cold-hardy biennial that is cultivated for its small leafy green buds. These bud-shaped sprouts, which resemble miniature cabbages, grow in a spiral array on the side of a long thick stalk. These stalks reach a height of approximately 2-4 feet in height and mature from the lower to the upper part of the stalk. If the plant over winters it shoots up into flowers and seeds in the spring. Since Brussels sprouts have a long growing season, the crop is often started in a greenhouse, cold frame or seedbed. The crop is then transplanted to the field in mid-April. Growers should time their planting so the sprouts are ready to pick after the first frost. The heads develop continually, so harvest is frequently over an extended period of time. You can begin harvesting sprouts when they are between ½ -1 inches in diameter. Most of the production in Washington is in the Skagit Valley where they have cool springs and mild summers.

In Washington, Brussels sprouts are produced for farmers' markets and local consumption. The sprouts have their sweetest flavor when they are small and tightly wrapped. Overcooking Brussels sprouts releases sulfur compounds in the vegetable and give it an unpleasant smell. The larger leaves of the plant are edible and can be substituted for spinach in recipes.

Brussels sprouts originated in Europe and have been grown near Brussels, Belgium for hundreds of years, hence the name.

Key pests:

The biggest pest problem in Brussels sprouts is aphids, both the cabbage aphid and the green peach aphid. Brussels sprouts are a long season crop and weeds can also be a pest problem. Weed pests include: shepardspurse, lambsquarter, pigweed, and annual grasses. The major diseases that effect Brussels sprouts is club root. This is a fungus found in the soil. There is no cure and Brassicas should not be grown in this soil for 5 or more years once detected.

Key pesticides:

Growers can control aphids by applying dimethoate. Maintaining beneficial insects such as parasitic wasps and ladybird beetles also help reduce aphid populations. For most weeds, growers use Treflan.

Critical pest

Control issues:

Brussels sprouts rely on honeybees for pollination so care must be taken when using insecticides. Using disease-free transplants and crop rotations can reduce most diseases in Brussels sprouts. To help minimize insect problems growers can use a row cover over the small seedlings. It is best not to plant crops in the cabbage family in the same spot year after year since diseases and insect pests will build up. Club root control is benefited by applications of hydrated lime to bring soil pH to 7.3 or above.

Expert contacts: Ray De Vries
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Location

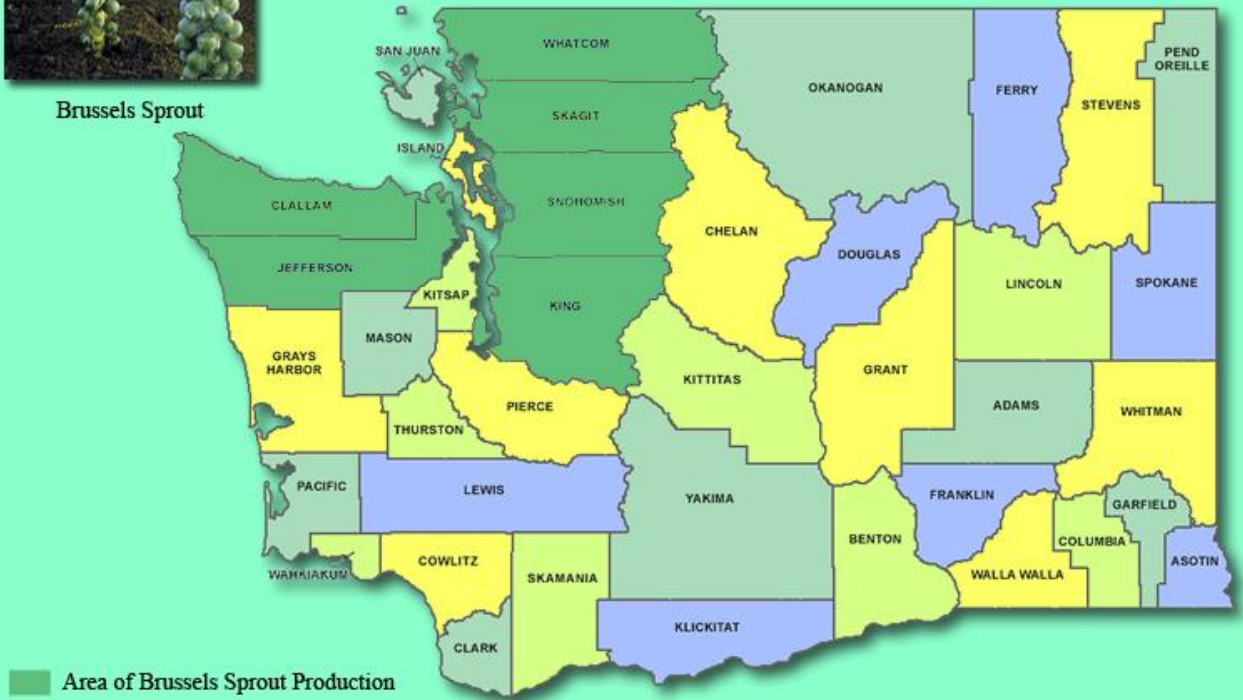
Of production:

Western Washington counties: Clallam, Jefferson, King, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties.



Brussels Sprout

Brussels Sprout Production in Washington State





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