

Chinese Kale

Brassica oleracea var. alboglabra (Cruciferae)

Fast Facts: Number of Growers: 5-10
Number of Acres: less than 100
Per Acre Value: \$1800 to \$2500
Percent of U.S. Acreage: less than 1%

Description

Of crop:

Chinese kale, also called Chinese broccoli or Kai-lan, is similar in use and appearance to broccoli. The primary difference is that Chinese kale is paler in appearance and its flavor is sweeter. It is a leafy vegetable, in the mustard family, that has glossy, blue green leaves with a crisp, thick stem that reaches 7-9 inches tall. It has a small number of tiny, vestigial flower heads similar to those of broccoli. Chinese kale is a cool season crop with some frost tolerance but may be grown all year round in temperate regions. Like many brassica species, planting too early in the spring may cause premature seed stalk development, called bolting. Bolting occurs when temperatures are too cold. Bolting-resistant varieties are available for early planting in mid April rather than late May.

Chinese kale is harvested 40 to 50 days after seeding, when the plant is still immature. It is hand harvested and should be harvested frequently to prevent bolting and toughening, especially in the summer. About three cuts can be obtained from one stem. Chinese kale should be harvested in the early morning to minimize water stress. Most of the Chinese kale grown in Washington is for the local farmers markets.

Chinese kale is widely eaten in Chinese cuisine, especially Cantonese cuisine. Unlike broccoli where only the flowering parts are eaten, with Chinese kale the leaves and stems are eaten also.

Key pests:

In Washington, cabbage maggot is the most severe pest. Other insect pests include sugarbeet leafhopper, cabbage aphid, turnip aphid, loopers and cutworms. The most serious diseases are downy mildew and Alternaria. Weed pests include: pigweed, lambsquarter, shepherdspurse, mustards and Canada thistle.

Key pesticides:

Cabbage maggot is controlled with Lorsban and the sugarbeet leadhopper is controlled with Asana. Aphids are controlled with Di-Syston Endosulfan controls loopers and cutworms. Ridomil controls downy mildew and Iprodione is applied to control Alternaria. Weed pests are controlled with Treflan for broadleaf weeds and Fusilade to control grasses. Hand hoeing also supplements weed control.

Critical pest**Control issues:**

Brassica are prone to soil infections so growers should maintain a 3-4 year rotation plan. It is important to maintain good sanitation practices especially in the destruction of any plant material that shows signs of disease. Growers should plant resistant varieties when available. It is necessary to find cheaper and more effective fungicides for farmers to control downy mildew. Chinese kale should not be stored with ethylene-producing produce as broccoli is ethylene sensitive.

Expert contacts: Dr. Carol Miles
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Location

Of Production: Franklin, Grant, Adams and Skagit counties.



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Chinese Kale Production in Washington State

