

## Chinese Mustard

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*Brassica juncea* (Cruciferae)

**Fast Facts:** Acres in Washington: less than 50 acres  
Number of Growers: less than 20 growers  
Per Acre Value: \$1800-\$2500  
Percent of U.S. Acreage: less than 20%

### **Description Of crop:**

Chinese mustard is a coarse-growing leafy annual of the Crucifer family, known botanically as *Brassica juncea*. Cultivars of *B. juncea* are grown as greens and include tatsoi, mizuna, takana and juk gai choy. It is grown for its succulent basal leaves that are typically large with blades reaching 6 inches or more in length. They can be smooth, curled or notched. The inner leaves will cluster but do not form a head. They are variable in shape but are usually dark green in color. Both the leaves and stems are edible and can be consumed raw, used in salads or cooked. They are very popular in Chinese and Vietnamese cooking and pickling. It has a mild flavor that will increase in pungency as the plant matures.

Chinese mustard is a late season vegetable in western Washington that is planted in early July and harvested several months later. This later planting reduces many pest problems. In eastern Washington, planting is earlier with marketable crops available in late June. It is hand harvested by cutting the plant at its base.

In Washington, Chinese mustard is grown and sold for local markets or at farmers markets. When harvested young, 2-3 plants are often bunched with bands or strings for markets. Most *brassic*as are picked once but Chinese mustard may be picked two or three times a season. There is a growing demand for multi-cultural vegetables like Chinese mustards. Chinese mustard is also grown on small acreage in Washington, partly as a means to limit pest problems. It is a good rotation crop for wheat since it can increase wheat yields by suppressing cereal root disease organisms. For this reason, Chinese mustard is also being looked at for its potential as a biofumigant.

### **Key pests:**

The major pest problem in Chinese mustard is the cabbage maggot. Other insect pests include: the cabbage aphid, turnip aphid, sugar beet leafhopper, cutworms, armyworms, and the cabbage looper. The major diseases that affect Chinese mustard are downy mildew, *Alternaria* leaf spot and *Sclerotinia*. Weed pests include sherdspurse, mustards, lambsquarter, pigweed, smartweed, quackgrass, henbit, groundsel and wild mustard.

**Key pesticides:**

The cabbage maggot is controlled with Lorsban. Fulfill controls aphids. The sugar beet leafhopper is controlled with Asana. Cutworms and loopers are controlled with endosulfan. For armyworm growers can use Thiodan. Downy mildew is controlled with Ridomil Gold or Bravo. Iprodione is applied to control Sclerotinia. For most weeds growers use Treflan.

**Critical pest****Control issues:**

Growers should use certified seed and resistant cultivars to reduce the incidence of disease. Any infected plant debris should be burned. Do not compost debris from infected plant material. Rotation programs should be rigorously followed and usually involves choosing an area where cruciferous crops have not been grown before.

**Expert contacts:** Dr. Carol Miles  
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**Location****Of Production:**

In eastern Washington: Benton, Yakima, and Franklin counties. In western Washington: King and Pierce counties.



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## Chinese Mustard Production in Washington State

