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Horticulture News

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Current Date: 2/21/23

Release Date: as soon as possible

Growing up we used to call them little baby cabbages! Brussels sprouts gets its name from Brussels, Belgium. The plant is a close relative of cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower, but is slower growing. Best success in Kansas is to grow the “sprouts”—small heads that grow along the stem and resemble small cabbage heads—in the fall season by planting in early July.

Varieties. Jade Cross, Oliver, and Prince Marvel as well as other early maturing varieties.

When to plant. Spring-planted crops should be set in late March. Fall crops, more reliable in Kansas, should be started in early July.

Spacing. Set plants about 2 feet apart in rows at least 3 feet apart. Plant seeds closer and thin to a strong, vigorous plant every 2 feet for a fall crop.

Care. Like cabbage, Brussels sprouts require regular watering and fertilizing. Some gardeners remove the leaves from the side of the plant after the sprouts start to develop, but this is not necessary. Topping or cutting the terminal bud from the plant when the plant is 2–2½ feet tall will speed the development of sprouts.

Harvesting. Snap or cut the sprouts from the stem when they are an inch in diameter. More sprouts will develop on the stem above.

The plant is quite freeze hardy and can be left in the garden until late November or early December in many years. Sprouts developing in hot weather will often be loose and of poor quality.