

Brussels Sprouts



Brussels sprouts (Brassica family) are grown for the miniature cabbage-like buds that develop on the 2 - 3 foot stem. They need a long cool growing season. Most gardeners find them to be disappointing if planted in the spring as temperatures rise too quickly for the maturing plant. If planted in the fall (October to November) they can take 90 to 100 days to mature from transplants. Raising transplants from seed takes 5 to 8 weeks and if it is still warm, they may need a little shade until temperatures drop.

Brussels sprouts like a well drained, fertile soil and should be side dressed with a complete fertilizer or

good compost when half grown. Space transplants 18 to 24 inches apart in rows 2 -3 feet apart. Set transplants a little deeper but don't bury the root ball. Water each plant in, then water daily for the first week. Water deeply once a week during the winter if there is no rain.

Before sprouts crowd each other, break off the lower leaves over a period of a few weeks, starting at the bottom and working up the stem, leaving the uppermost foliage. Pick when 1 - 2 inches in diameter and firm.

Varieties include Long Island Improved - (100 days) a semi-dwarf, old commercial variety; Jade Cross "E" - (96 days) a tall hybrid with better bud spacing, and Prince Marvel - (90 days) another tall (35") hybrid.

Brussels sprouts should not be grown in soil where other Brassicas have been before. All crops of this genus should be planted on a rotation pattern to avoid diseases building up in the soil. Commercial growers top the plants when the lower sprouts are about three-quarters of an inch in diameter. The crop is ready for harvest about a month later when sprouts are one half to one inch in diameter. This produces a stalk of fairly uniform sprouts for an once-over harvest.

Original article by Joyce Gemmell, courtesy of the San Diego Master Gardeners website; edited for use on the Marin Master Gardener website by N Londeree