



ORDER YOUR ALMANAC TODAY!

HOME > GARDENING > GROWING GUIDES

How to Grow Cauliflower: The Complete Guide



Photo Credit: Pixabay

Botanical Classification	Brassica oleracea
Plant Type	Vegetable
Season	Full Sun

FREE GUIDE!

 **Wide variety** of services:
Over 750 freelance services.

Explore the possibilities

sur

e:

Soi

I

pH

:

Slightly

Acidic

to

Neutral

Blo

om

Ti

me

:

Spring

Flo

we

r

Col

or:

White

Grow your best garden ever –
download our **FREE Companion
Planting Chart.**

Enter your email address

SIGN UP

Also receive the Almanac Daily newsletter including gar-
dening tips, weather, astronomical events, and more.



The Almanac Garden Planner - Use It Free for
7 Days!

[TRY NOW](#)

Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Cauliflower

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: April 24, 2025



Cauliflower is a sun-loving, cool-season crop to grow in spring and fall. An annual plant in the cabbage family, cauliflower has edible white flesh that is extremely healthy and considered a “superfood.”

ADVERTISEMENT

About Cauliflower

This vegetable’s name comes from the Latin words *caulis*, for cabbage, and *floris*, for flower. It’s a descendant of wild cabbage! Like its cousin [broccoli](#), the tightly bunched florets of cauliflower are connected by a thick core, often with a few light leaves surrounding it.

ADVERTISEMENT

[BUY SEEDS NOW](#)

Though usually white, cauliflower does come in other colors, including purple, yellow, and orange. No matter the color, the taste is the same: mild, slightly sweet, and a little nutty.

ADVERTISEMENT

Cauliflower can be a challenge for beginner gardeners because it requires consistently cool temperatures in the 60°Fs. Otherwise, it may prematurely “button”—form small, button-size heads—rather than forming a single, large head.

Read Next

- [How to Grow Swiss Chard Plants: The Complete Guide](#)

- [How to Grow Carrots: The Complete Guide](#)

PLANTING

Cauliflower should be grown in a spot that gets full sun (6 to 8 hours of sunlight per day). Lack of sunlight may produce thin, leggy plants and subpar heads. In summer, shade plants from the hot sun, if necessary.

Soil needs to be very rich in [organic matter](#); mix aged manure and/or compost into the bed before planting. As an alternative, apply 5-10-10 fertilizer to the planting site. Fertile soil helps to prevent heads from buttoning.

When to Plant Cauliflower

- Cauliflower grows best as a fall crop (cool weather is best for head formation), but can be grown in spring, too.
- We suggest buying cauliflower seedlings (aka “transplants”) versus starting them from seed, as cauliflower

- If you start from seed, sow seeds indoors 4 to 5 weeks before the last spring frost date.
- Plant seedlings outdoors 2 to 4 weeks before the last spring frost date.
- **Fall Planting:**
 - Plant a fall crop 6 to 8 weeks before the first fall frost date, but after daytime temperatures are regularly below 75°F.

How to Plant Cauliflower

- Sow seeds in rows 3 to 6 inches apart and up to ½ inch deep.
- Set plants 18 to 24 inches apart with 30 inches between rows.
- In early spring, be ready to protect plants from frost by covering them with old milk jugs, if necessary. Extreme cold can halt growth and/or form buttons.
- Water consistently during germination and growth. Add mulch to conserve moisture.



GROWING

- Cauliflower dislikes any interruption to its growth. Change, in the form of temperature, moisture, soil nutrition, or insects, can cause the plants to develop a head prematurely or ruin an existing one.
- Water regularly with 2 inches of water per square foot each week; even with normal rainfall, this usually requires supplemental watering.
- For best growth, side-dress the plants with a high-nitrogen fertilizer 3 to 4 weeks after transplanting.
- Note that the cauliflower will start out as a loose head and that it takes time for the head to fully form. Many vari-

- Brown heads indicate a boron deficiency in the soil. Drench with 1 tablespoon of borax in 1 gallon of water. (Avoid getting boron on other plants.) Or, provide liquid seaweed extract immediately; repeat every 2 weeks until symptoms disappear. In the future, add more compost to the soil.
- For white varieties, pink heads can indicate too much sun exposure or temperature fluctuations. Purple hues can be due to stress or low soil fertility.

Blanching Cauliflower Heads

When the curd (the white head) is 2 to 3 inches in diameter, blanch it: Tie the outer leaves together over the head and secure with a rubber band, tape, or twine to keep light out. (This is not necessary for self-blanching or colored varieties). The plants are usually ready for harvest 7 to 12 days after blanching.

Types

- **‘Graffiti’**: purple; tends to be milder and sweeter than the white varieties.

the growing season.

- Orange varieties, such as '**Cheddar**' and '**Flame Star**', are creamier and sweeter than white varieties with more vitamin A.



Cauliflower at a farm stand in Washington, D.C., 2019. Credit: Wendy Hagen.

HARVESTING

- Plants are usually ready to harvest in about 50 to 100 days, depending on variety, or 7 to 12 days after blanching.
- When the heads are compact, white, and firm, then it is time to harvest them. Ideally, the heads will grow to 6 to 8 inches in diameter.
- Cut the heads off the plant with a large knife. Be sure to leave some of the

- If the heads are too small, but have already started to open up, they will not improve and should be harvested immediately.
- If the cauliflower has a coarse appearance, it is past maturity and should be tossed.

How to Store Cauliflower

- Store heads in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. They should last for about a week.
- For long-term storage, you can also freeze or pickle the heads. To freeze, cut into 1-inch-bite pieces. Blanch for 3 minutes in lightly salted water. Cool in an ice bath for 3 minutes, drain, and package. Seal and freeze.

GARDENING PRODUCTS



\$8.99

\$9.99

\$8.79



WIT AND WISDOM

Cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education.

-Mark Twain (1835-1910)

PESTS/DISEASES

Cauliflower Pests and Diseases

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
Aphids	Insect	Curled, misshapen/yellow leaves; distorted flowers/fruit; sticky “honeydew” (excrement); sooty, black mold	Grow companion plants; knock off with water spray; apply insecticidal soap; put banana or orange peels around plants; wipe leaves with a 1 to 2 percent solution of water and dish soap (no additives) every 2 to 3 days for 2 weeks;

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
			insects (such as ladybugs)
Black rot	Fungus	Yellow, V-shape areas on leaf edges that brown and progress toward leaf center; leaves eventually collapse; stem cross sections reveal blackened veins	Destroy infected plants; choose resistant varieties; provide good drainage; remove plant debris; rotate crops
<u>Cabbage loopers</u>	Insect	Large, ragged holes in leaves from larval feeding; defoliation; stunted or bored heads; excrement	Handpick off plants; add native plants to invite beneficial insects; spray larvae with insecticidal soap or <i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i> (Bt)—a natural, bacterial pesticide; use row covers; remove plant debris at end of season

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
<u>Cabbage root maggots</u>	Insect	White maggots become gray flies that resemble small houseflies. Wilted/stunted plants; off-color leaves; larvae feeding on roots	Use collars made of plastic or tin foil around seedling stems; monitor adults with yellow sticky traps; use row covers; destroy crop residue; till soil in fall; rotate crops
<u>Cabbageworms</u>	Insect	Leaves have large, ragged holes or are skeletonized; heads bored; dark green excrement; yellowish eggs laid singly on leaf undersides	Handpick; use row covers; add native plants to invite beneficial insects; grow companion plants (especially thyme); spray Bt (<i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i>)
Clubroot	Fungus	Wilted/stunted plants; yellow leaves; roots appear swollen/distorted	Destroy infected plants; solarize soil; maintain soil pH of around 7.2; disinfect tools; rotate crops
<u>Downy mildew</u>	Fungus	Yellow, angular spots on upper leaf surfaces that turn brown;	Remove plant debris; choose resistant varieties; ensure good air cir

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
		leaf undersides only; distorted leaves; defoliation	
Nitrogen deficiency	Deficiency	Bottom leaves turn yellow and the problem continues toward the top of the plant	Supplement with a high nitrogen (but low phosphorus) fertilizer or blood meal. Blood meal is a quick nitrogen fix for yellowing leaves
<u>Stink bugs</u>	Insect	Yellow/white blotches on leaves; shriveled seeds; eggs, often keg-shape, in clusters on leaf undersides	Destroy crop residue; handpick (bugs emit odor, wear gloves); destroy eggs; spray nymphs with insecticidal soap; use row covers; weed; till soil in fall
<u>Thrips</u>	Insect	Leaves, especially in folds near base, have white patches or silver streaks; brown leaf tips; blistering/bronzing on leaves; brown streaks on cauli-	Remove plant debris; choose resistant varieties; add native plants to invite beneficial insects; use row covers; use straw mulch; monitor adults with yellow

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
		stunted; curling or scarring	blers or other overhead watering
White rust	Fungus	Chalk-white blisters mainly on leaf undersides; small, yellow-green spots or blisters, sometimes in circular arrangement, on upper leaf surfaces; possible distortion or galls; stems may also be infected. More common with warm days and cool/moist nights	Destroy infected plants; choose resistant varieties; weed; destroy crop residue; rotate crops

RECIPES

CAULIFLOWER AND BRIE SOUP

SWEET 'N' SUNNY CAULIFLOWER SALAD

Sign up for daily gardening advice and tips

SIGN UP

MORE LIKE THIS



**How to Grow
Swiss Chard
Plants: The
Complete
Guide**



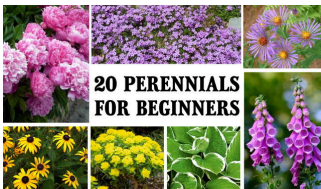
**Guide on
Harvesting
Vegetables:
When to
Harvest Most
Common
Crops**



**How to Grow
Carrots: The
Complete
Guide**



**How to Grow
Radishes: The
Complete
Guide**



**20 Easy-to-
Grow
Perennial
Flowers for
Beginners**



**Dwarf and
Mini
Vegetables and
Fruit for
Containers**



GROW YOUR BEST GARDEN YET

Join The Old Farmer's Almanac Gardening Club Today!

[LEARN MORE](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

COMMENTS

[ADD A COMMENT](#)

david Bain (not verified) 1 year 10 months

ago

How tall will Brussel sprouts grow to?

ADVERTISEMENT

[REPLY](#)

The Editors 1 year 10 months ago

David- Brussel Sprouts typically grow to 2 to 3 feet, depending on the variety.

Check out our [Brussel Sprouts Growing Guide](#) to learn more.

REPLY

Jana (not verified) 3 years 9 months ago

Last year and this year we tried to grow cauliflower from seed. We had nice seedlings and planted them. Last year 2 out of the 4 grew nicely, but only one produced a beautiful head.

This year we planted 4 seedling and all four plants look beautiful but only one is producing a flower. It's about 4 inches now but the other three have lots of gorgeous leaves but no flower. We have them planted in a bed with Brussels sprouts spaced appropriately. What would cause these beautiful plants to not produce a flower?

[REPLY](#)

Liz (not verified) 3 years 10 months ago

We are growing cauliflower for the first time and each of our plants has one nice head of cauli but they are yellow, not white. We didn't know about blanching until today and the heads are already about 5 to 6 inches in diameter:(

We have pulled the leaves up around it and secured them with twine as of today. Is the yellow colour normal and simply an indication of the need to blanch? Or is the cauliflower gone bad or too mature? Can we still eat it? Thanks so much for your helpful reply!!!

[REPLY](#)

Julian (not verified) 3 years 4 months ago

How can I see couliflower is ready to cook it?

[REPLY](#)

Terry Bluestone (not verified) 3 years 11 months ago

Wealth of information here and I will be covering them with the leaves of the plant. I planted 12 starts on April 5th and they are just starting to form a head.

REPLY

Dan (not verified) 4 years 3 months ago

Hi.

I just grew my first patch of 8 heads of organic cauliflower. They came out great and all I did was water daily and feed once a month. Big beautiful snowwhite heads about 4 pounds each. And they are delicious! Almost better raw than cooked.

I know they only produce a single flower, but after harvesting them, I cut and sauteed some of the leaves.....and they were delicious, too!! Kinda like a mix of chard and kale. They were still firm and not mushy like sauteed spinach. I will try some of the stalks, too.

Just thought I'd share that if you grow it, then you can eat everything. 0 waste.

REPLY

Karen Sapper (not verified) 4 years 4 months ago

I didn't pull up my plants after harvest this year so I could feed the foliage to my chickens. I was so surprised when the plan started to grow again and now has beautiful heads of cauliflower ready to harvest. My brussel sprouts are doing the same thing. Is this a practice I can continue? Will the plants continue to produce like this each year?

REPLY

The Editors 4 years 3 months ago

Cauliflower is an annual so that confuses us! However, Brussel sprouts are a biennial, which means their natural grow cycle is two years along! So if you live in an area where it doesn't get too cold, they'll keep producing. After their second year's fall harvest, they will flower and set seed. At that

future plantings!

REPLY

Deborah (not verified) 4 years 7 months ago

Can a cauliflower (and Brussels Sprouts) be grown in a 5-gallon bucket? Do they have deep roots?

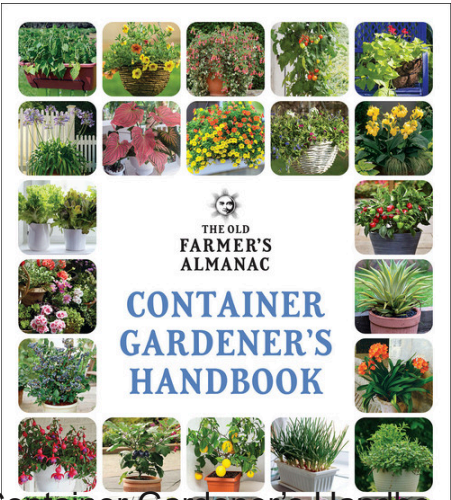
REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

THE OLD FARMER'S STORE



Gardener's Scrub 3 Bar Gift



Container Gardener's Handbook

BUY NOW



Moon Phase Wildflower Seed ...

\$9.95

BUY NOW

BUY NOW



Moon Phase Spring Pollinator...

\$9.95

BUY NOW

ADVERTISEMENT

Our Brands

[The Old Farmer's](#)

[Almanac for Kids](#)

[Yankee Magazine](#)

[Family Tree Magazine](#)

[NH Business Review](#)

Resources

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Free Daily Newsletter](#)

[Webcam](#)

Connect with Us



[Yankee Custom
Marketing](#)

[Where to Buy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Cookie List](#)

[Do Not Sell or Share](#)

[My Personal](#)

[Information](#)

©2025 [Yankee Publishing Inc.](#), An Employee-Owned Company

1121 Main Street | P.O. Box 520 | Dublin, NH 03444