



GROWING & USING
BRASSICAS
VEGETABLES IN THE BRASSICACEAE FAMILY

WRITTEN BY JOHN MASON AND STAFF OF ACS DISTANCE EDUCATION

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Many of our most common and popular vegetables belong to the brassica (cabbage) family. The scientific name for this family used to be Cruciferae, but is now known as Brassicaceae. The plants under this family are all called either 'crucifers' or 'brassicas'. Both names are appropriate.

Brassica is used scientifically as a genus name for many but not all vegetables in the *Brassicaceae* family. Brassica is also used in common language encompass other many plants that are not of the genus Brassica.

Autumn is an ideal time to plant members of the brassica (cabbage) family and although some can be grown over warmer months, they mostly perform better during cooler conditions.

Brassicas include: cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale, Chinese cabbage, kohlrabi, turnip, swede, radish and rocket – a great variety to choose from. You can plant seedlings of many brassicas in autumn, to harvest in winter or early spring.



Brassica flowering

Are Crucifers Edible For All People?

Most are edible for most people; but some people can have problems with all or some crucifers. This may be because of a food sensitivity or allergy.

Crucifers also contain chemicals called glucosinolates which may have beneficial effects on some cancers.

- A chemical called phenylthiocarbimide found in crucifers, is virtually tasteless to most people, but can have a bitter taste to some, which may make brassicas unpalatable.
- Chemicals in crucifers can affect the presence of a particular liver enzyme which in turn can reduce the effectiveness of some drugs including warfarin.

TAXONOMY OF BRASSICAS

There are approximately 338 genera in the Brassicaceae family which include almost 4,000 species. The two most important brassica species according to Hortus Third are *Brassica oleracea*