

Cauliflower



Sun: Plant in full sun (6 to 8 hours). Space 18 inches apart within rows or 1 plant per 5- to 7-gallon container. Plant from late July through August for fall harvest.

Soil: Amend with organic matter to create a well-drained soil. Avoid planting in unamended sandy or heavy clay soils. If the soil test shows the pH is below 6.2, apply lime as recommended.

For proper drainage in a container garden, use potting mix and ensure containers have drainage holes. Alternatively, consider using self-watering containers.

Water: Keep soil consistently moist, but not saturated. Apply 1 to 2 inches of water each week and more during hot summer days. Avoid wetting leaves to avoid fungal diseases. Mulch helps retain moisture.

Plant: Start seedlings 6 weeks before planting and slowly harden off 1 week before moving to the garden. If buying transplants, choose those with healthy color and a stocky appearance. Dig the planting hole as deep as the root ball. Firmly pat down the soil and water deeply.

Fertilize: In the absence of a soil test, apply an all-purpose fertilizer (8-8-8 or 10-10-10) at planting, according to label directions. Reapply 4 to 6 inches from the stem (side-dress), 3 to 4 weeks after planting to stimulate growth.

Insects/Diseases/Weeds: Scout plants frequently for insect and disease damage. Use insecticidal soap (for soft-bodied insects) or Bt dust or spray (for caterpillars, or worms). Spray fungicide regularly to suppress common fungal diseases. Always follow label instructions. Mulch inhibits weeds and diseases.

Harvest: Harvest at 60 to 70 days, when curds (aborted flower heads) are 6 to 8 inches in diameter. Harvest time varies depending on the variety.

Other: Sunlight discolors the curd and produces off flavors. To prevent this, gather the long leaves over the head and tie them together as soon as the curd develops. Cauliflower does best when planted for fall harvest.

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