

Cultural Details: **Ornamental Cabbage and Kale**

Well-grown plants, with large heads, can look quite spectacular in bedding schemes. These brassicas are quite cold-tolerant, and cold temperatures enhance the attractive foliage colours.

Variety Selection

We have several mixtures and individual coloured varieties, ranging from the round-leaved ornamental cabbage Tokyo to the deeply-cut, feathered leaves of Peacock Kale.

Programming the Crop

Sow from late June to early August, for sales in large pots from late Autumn to early Spring.

Propagation and Growing-on

Use clean trays, bench tops and water supply to reduce disease potential. Sow the large seed (260 per gram) into large plug trays ideally to prevent root disturbance, or seedling trays. Wet thoroughly with a suitable fungicide if possible, prior to sowing (to prevent damping-off diseases), and allow the trays to drain. Cover seed with around 5mm of compost. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Germination takes around 5 days at 15-20°C.

If plants were sown in seedling trays, prick out into large cell trays after a couple of weeks, and grow on until plants are well established and leaves touching those of adjacent plants. Keep good air movement to minimise diseases such as mildew.

Pot up into 10-15cm pots (half pots give extra stability) and space the plants well. If plants have developed a stem during production, this can be buried when planting, so the rosette sits on the compost surface. Feed well with a balanced liquid fertilizer to avoid yellowing of the fast-growing foliage. Grow on outside, or in a cold frame to keep the pigeons off. Plants should start to colour up as the night temperature drops below around 10°C.

Pest and Disease

Caterpillars, whitefly and aphids can all take their toll on these succulent plants – monitor and spray accordingly. Exclude slugs from the cropping area.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.