

SFA

Seeds for Africa

Cauliflower

Cauliflowers are grown for their central white heads (curds) and can be grown all year round as long as the correct variety for the time of year is chosen.

Cauliflowers take up quite a bit of space so don't grow them if your vegetable patch needs high yield per square foot.

Although a member of the cabbage family cauliflowers require more care and attention than cabbages to be grown successfully.

PREPARATION:

Dig the soil thoroughly MONTHS (rather than weeks) before planting. This is because Cauliflowers grow well in a consolidated soil.

When digging the soil work some organic compost and / or manure into the soil.

If necessary, lime the soil (at earliest 6 weeks after digging in the organic matter).

SOWING:

Sow cauliflower seed around 1/2 cm deep in individual seedling pots / trays. After germination place the seedlings in a well lit spot at around 60 deg F.

About 6 weeks after sowing the seedlings should be ready to harden off before planting out. Harden the seedlings off a week before planting out by gradually increasing the amount of time the plants are left outside and the amount of sun the plants receive.

Plant out your seedlings at around 60cm apart and if sowing in rows then space your rows 100cm apart.

POSITION:

Cauliflowers are a cool weather crop. Hot temperatures can reduce head development. In summer you can cover the head with the plants leaves.

SOIL TYPE:

The soil should have been dug deep. Cauliflower grows well in loamy, well drained soils.

The soils PH should be neutral or slightly alkaline. Lime if necessary.

TENDING:

Apply a fertiliser just after planting out.

Put Cabbage Root Fly discs around the base of the plants to help prevent cabbage fly damage.

Successful cauliflower growing requires regular continuous growing conditions. Any stress to the plant will result in a reduction in head growth which is often known as 'Buttoning'

It is vital not to let the soil dry out as lack of water can lead to the production of small heads. Water regularly.

For summer varieties a mulch can be applied to help soil moisture retention.

HARVESTING:

The size to harvest Cauliflowers at depends on the variety you have grown.

Start to harvest Cauliflowers before they reach their full size to ensure a staggered crop. This will help prevent a mass of crop within just a few days.

To harvest your home grown Cauliflower cut the stalk with a sharp knife but be sure to leave a number of leaves that surround the head to protect it.

If the florets of the Cauliflower head have started to open then you have passed the harvest date. The heads will also start to discolour once past the end of the correct harvesting period.

You can store cauliflowers for up to 3 weeks by hanging them upside down and mist-spraying with water every day.

Harvest the cauliflowers in the early morning when they are at their most succulent.

Once harvested break up the remaining stalk and roots and add to your compost heap as unlike some other brassicas such as Broccoli, Cauliflower will not grow new heads.

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