



Harvest of the Month

Collard Greens



Collard greens are called Berzas in Spanish.

A hardy, nutritious green that symbolizes resilience, heritage, comfort, and good fortune!

Social Science

Collards date back to prehistoric times, and are one of the oldest members of the Brassica family. The ancient Greeks grew kale and collards, although they made no distinction between them. The Romans grew several kinds and may have been responsible for taking them to Britain and France; or the Celts may have introduced them to these countries. They reached into the British Isles in the 4th century B.C. and became a very important food crop, especially in Scotland.

English and Spanish settlers brought the seeds to the New World in the 1500s and 1600s, but the collard was a minor plant in colonists' gardens. Enslaved Africans, however, made the collard central to the South's diet.

Though collards did not originate in Africa, the habit of eating greens that have been cooked down into a low gravy, and drinking the juices from the greens (known as "pot likker") is of African origin. The slaves of the plantations were given the leftover food from the plantation kitchen. Some of this food consisted of the tops of turnips and other greens (they were also given the scrap meat). Forced to create meals from these leftovers, they created the famous southern greens.

Collards were one of the most common plants grown in the slaves' gardens and were used to supplement the rations provided by plantation owners. They were widely used because the plants could last through the winter weather and could also withstand the heat of a southern summer better than any other leafy green.

Nutrition

Collards are fiber-rich and an excellent source of vitamins and minerals including vitamin A, C, and K and Manganese. They also contain moderate amounts of Calcium and Vitamin B6.

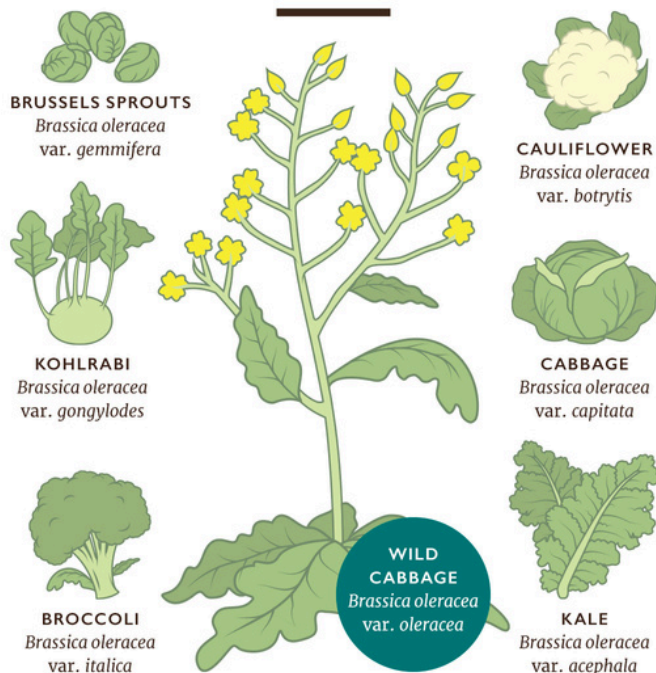
Growing Tips

Collards are both cold and heat tolerant and can be grown year round in Sonoma County. However, they are much more tender and have a sweeter flavor when harvested during cooler weather. For a Fall and Winter crop, plant seeds in mid-Summer. You can also transplant starter plants at the beginning of September. If you plant in Spring the plants could produce for an entire year before going to seed.

Botany

The scientific name of collards is *Brassica oleracea*. They are a member of the brassica family of plants which contains many food crops including broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, turnips, kale, etc. In fact, collards are actually the same genus and species of plant as kales!

One Species, Many Vegetables



Care & Maintenance

Collards are a very easy plant to grow. As long as they have regular water in the summer and moderately fertile soil, they are very self-sufficient. Collards can be bothered by aphids during warmer weather, which can usually be kept under control by spraying them off with a strong blast of water.

Harvesting

Collards are a long-term crop. Harvest the outer-most leaves and don't take too much and the plant will just keep on growing.