



Growing Brussels Sprouts - The Gourmet Vegetable

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For some gardeners, growing a great crop of Brussels sprouts can be a little intimidating. The trick is finding your perfect planting window.

For delicious sprouts, cool weather is essential during maturity. The small heads produce the sweetest flavor with sunny, cool days and light frosty nights.

Brussels sprouts require 80-100 days from seed to harvest, and should be directly seeded into the garden in early to mid-summer, depending on your planting window. Sow seeds $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, 18-24 inches apart in rows, with 28-30 inches between rows. Plant in full sun, and in rich, well drained soil containing plenty of organic matter. Plants will grow to about three feet tall with large umbrella-like leaves on long stems. The sprouts develop in the leaf axils (the point between where the leaf joins the stem) with the lower sprouts maturing first.

The sprouts can be harvested when they are firm, and 1 - $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. Snap the sprouts off the stalks, and harvest the lowest heads first. Once picked, new sprouts will not regrow in the same place. They continue to grow upwards on the stalk. The lower leaves can be removed to allow for easy harvesting.

Brussels sprouts generally don't have many pests since they are grown during cool weather. However, there are a few you need to watch for, the most common being cabbageworms and aphids. Since Brussels sprouts don't require pollination, row covers can be used protect your plants from pests. They can also be bothered by powdery mildew and rust. To aid in disease prevention, maintain the soil pH at 6.5 or above, and buy varieties that are disease resistant.

Try roasting Brussels sprouts to enhance their natural nutty flavor. Deliciously gourmet!

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