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BRUSSELS SPROUTS

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This vegetable is of particular value because of its adaptability to the fall and early winter season and its hardiness to cold weather. The plant will withstand lower temperatures than almost any other member of the cabbage family. The sprouts have an individually pleasing flavor, serving as a variation of food from cabbage, cauliflower and sprouting broccoli.

The name Brussels originated from the city of Brussels, Belgium, and the sprouts themselves are small buds or heads which grow in the axils of the leaves. As the plant makes its vertical growth these sprouts develop continually upward on the stem, the sprouts at the lower part of the plant developing before those toward the upper portion.

There are two main troubles often experienced in growing Brussels sprouts: first, injury by lice to the buds in their formation; and, second, the lack of solidity of the sprouts. Both of these problems are treated somewhat in detail in later paragraphs of this circular.

Soils and Fertilizers. Brussels sprouts will grow well in any soil of moderate fertility and structure. A soil that will produce good late cabbage or cauliflower should grow a satisfactory crop of sprouts. In view of the fact that the crop is harvested quite late in the fall, it is desirable to have a well drained soil.

Fertilizers for this crop consist of rotted manure and oftentimes a complete commercial fertilizer, which may have been applied to the land for the first crop preceding the sprouts. Such a fertilizer may have consisted of approximately 500 to 1000 pounds of a balanced fertilizer, having a possible analysis of 5-10-10. The main considerations in fertilizing the soil for sprouts are to avoid having the soil too rich in nitrogen so as to inhibit a solid formation of the sprouts and yet there should be a sufficiently vigorous growth for the production of good sized sprouts. The crop requires a fairly high content of potash for its best development and greatest solidity of the buds. When the sprouts will not become solid but grow loose and leafy, this condition is probably caused by an excess of nitrogen in the plant or the seed strain may have been inferior.

Plant Growing. Brussels sprouts plants are grown in outdoor seedbeds in a similar manner to those of late cabbage, cauliflower, or kale, seed being sown thinly in rows about 18 to 24 inches apart during early May so that the plants may be transplanted through late June or early July. The desire of the grower should be to begin harvesting sometime in October, which would necessitate the plants being set out before the soil becomes too dry or the weather

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unusually warm. The plants require a space of at least 24 inches in the row with the rows 36 inches apart. The varieties of sprouts which are commonly grown include Long Island Improved, Danish Prize, Odense Market, and others. It is often true that strains of varieties may vary more greatly in uniformity of production than individual varieties themselves.

Maintenance. There are three important things in the care of Brussels sprouts plants through the summer. The soil must be cultivated to inhibit the growth of weeds. It is desirable also to irrigate the plants if possible during the summer unless the soil is unusually retentive of moisture. There should be a uniform amount of soil moisture through the drier months to influence the proper growth of the plants and a solid formation of the buds.

Probably the most important part of the care of the plants during the summer and early fall is the prevention of injury to the buds by lice. Due to the savoyed type of leaf of the plant and of the small buds, lice may often badly affect the plant and lie hidden and protected in the blistered portion of the leaves, particularly on the undersides of the same. It is desirable to treat the plants early for possible lice attacks. This can be done by applying nicotine compounds so as to discourage infestation of the plants by the aphids. Repetitions of dusting or spraying will have to be made during the summer and early fall months. It is particularly necessary to see that the controlling material is directed toward the under sides of the leaves and on the small forming sprouts.

Harvesting and Preparation for Market. The harvesting of Brussels sprouts begins when the buds at the lower part of the plant are solid. These are broken off at the juncture of the main stem. The leaf of the plant below the bud is usually ready to fall off about the time that the sprout itself is solid. The upper sprouts of the plant will develop later in the harvesting season.

The sprouts should then be examined for any yellow outside leaves and those which may have been affected by lice. These should be peeled off so that the sprout is clean and has no loose outer leaves. The market demands are for large, solid, clean buds.

Packages used for marketing Brussels sprouts in Oregon consist of a small flat box holding 15 pounds net and for smaller retail packages cardboard or veneer till baskets may be used.

The harvesting season on Brussels sprouts extends usually from October to December. The values vary from 9 to 15 cents a pound. Boxes of 15 pounds have a normal sales value of approximately \$1.35 to \$1.50.

Circulars on the growing of other members of the cabbage tribe are available including those on early cabbage, late cabbage, cauliflower, cauliflower-broccoli and sprouting broccoli. Send your requests for any of these circulars to the Clerical Exchange, Corvallis, Oregon.