



Not Just Garnish: Kale Is an Easy-to-Grow Superfood for You and Your Livestock

Kale, when prepared well, is delicious. Sautéed, it's mildly sweet, slightly bitter, and has an earthiness that just feels healthy. Steamed, it's a little less exciting but, in a pinch, kale will work in any recipe which includes spinach, collards, mustard, or other boiled/steamed greens.

Roughly 2,400 years ago, Hippocrates wrote, "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." We got a gut suspicion he was thinking about kale when he wrote that—or at least one of its ancient ancestors in the Brassica family. There are reports of kale helping reverse the progression of Multiple Sclerosis, lower cholesterol, improve eyesight, and fight cancer.

Another area where kale shines is as an animal feed, particularly for chickens. Are your hens looking lack luster? Egg yolks a bit pale? Load them up with kale. After you started feeding kale regularly the yolks of the hens' eggs darkened to a rich orange. The eggs are observably richer in nutrients. If you raise goats or pigs, it's not a bad idea to grow some kale for them, as well. The nutrition that heals us also nourishes our livestock. Give them nutrient-dense feed like kale to help them thrive.

How to Grow Kale

Now let's get into the "how-to" of growing kale. Kale is a cool-season biennial that's among the easiest of garden plants. It thrives on double-dug beds, even in sand, and can produce for easily half the year, or more. Plant kale in fall or early spring, taking care not to bury the tiny seeds too deep. One kale plant (depending on variety) can grow a couple of feet tall and spread to the same extent. Give them enough water when they're little, and they'll reward you with plenty of growth. From the observations, direct-seeded plants are a lot tougher than ones grown indoors or on a porch, then put in the garden. Unlike tomatoes and other warm-season crops, kale isn't particularly phased by late frosts. You can plant it in spring a month or so before the last frost date and it will usually come through.

In more temperate areas, kale grows all the way through the winter; whereas in cooler areas, growth may slow or stop, but kale is rarely killed, even by being buried in snow. In fact, the taste gets even sweeter after a frost. If you're a gourmet, consider growing the attractive and mild-flavored "Lacinato" or "Dinosaur" kale. It's a mild cultivar from Italy that can handle cold into the teens without dying. If you live further north and fear your temps will be below 10°F (or even below 0°F), get "Siberian" kale. For fresh food in the depth of winter, kale is rivaled only by Jerusalem artichokes, turnips, and a few other hardy survivors. Even carrots will turn to mush before kale gives up.

The only time it's hard to grow kale is during a hot summer. High temperatures are kale's enemy. If you have hot summers, grow it under grape trellises or taller crops to protect it from the worst of the sun's heat. Of course, even if your kale does give up, it's going to be at a time when you're likely to have plenty of other warm-season veggies to enjoy.

If you're planning a year-round supply of healthy edibles, kale is a reliable bridge between the first frost of autumn and the last frost of spring. Don't go without it—and next time you see a spread of hors d'oeuvres on a bed of deep green, skip the breaded cocktail weiners and eat the kale. Your health will thank you.

Soil Lovers say: Plant Kale For Your Animals, They Love Variety In Their Diet

Ref: <https://thegrownetwork.com/kale-superfood-you-livestock/>

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