



## Horticulture Hints

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'Tis the season for brassicas! Those lovely, tasty green vegetables that we all know and love. But here are a few things about them that you may not know.

Brassicas are a genus of plants in the cabbage and mustard family, and contains some 37 species, including, as we all know, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, etc. But did you know that broccoli and cauliflower were developed sometime possibly in the 1500's, but possibly as early as the sixth century in the Mediterranean and Asia Minor? Broccoli, specifically, was developed from kale by selecting plants with the largest flowering heads. How exactly cauliflower was developed is a little less certain and a little more confusing, but apparently also came from kale. Rapeseed, which is used to make canola oil, is also in this large and diverse group of food. The word "rapeseed" (which I think is an unfortunate bastardization of the Latin) comes from the Latin word rapum, which means turnip. It's a mustard-like plant that bears bright yellow flowers which turn into the seed used to press for oil. The term "canola" came into being when farmers in the Canadian prairie provinces started growing and processing the seed. We came to know it as Canadian oil, and in the American habit of shortening everything, subsequently became known as canola.

Brassicas are also informally known as cruciferous vegetables, which comes from

the New Latin word *Cruciferae*, meaning "cross bearing". This refers to the four petals of the flowers, which form a cross when observed from above. The brassicas are some of the most nutritious food that can be eaten today, and NOW is the time to plant them! There is still plenty of time to get a good crop, and many of the brassicas' flavors actually improve with a frost. Providing, of course, that it isn't actually a



Brassicas

hard freeze. But I have to say that even at that, the hard freezes we had last year didn't touch my kale. I hope to have the same experience this year.

My tomatoes are still going gangbusters, but after planting four different varieties, there is

one clear winner: Super Sweet 100's from Burpee. I don't think that the Sungold variety seeds I got were the right ones. The fruit turned out medium sized, streaked red and green (not the orangey/gold or cherry-type



Super Sweet 100's from Burpee

they were supposed to be), and were very prone to some moth that laid its eggs and subsequent caterpillars all over them. Kind of

a pretty fruit, but not all that tasty. Neither the Everglades nor the Tiny Tim's grew so much as single bunch of fruit. I would like to, however, try them again in the spring. The Super Sweet 100's bore early, consistently, and plentifully. In addition, they did not seem to attract the previously mentioned moth. I also planted tomatillos in the same bed as the tomatoes, something I will not do again. Not being familiar with the growth habit, there was too much greenery to see the plant clearly, and know what to prune back to encourage more fruit. Next time, I'll plant the tomatillos in one bed, and sparsely, so I can tell where to prune without killing the new branches. There have been quite a few fruits, but I know I can do better if properly pruned. Beets have also been planted in a new temporary bed, and an older bed replenished for when the cabbage seedlings (New Jersey Wakefield variety) - all 36 of them - are ready to go in. They can then grow for the rest of the winter, being harvested as needed.

I hope all of you have a wonderful holiday season, full of greenery and flowers! Happy gardening!