

Cauliflower

(Brassica oleracea var. botrytis)

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SOWING

Cauliflower needs cool weather. So it can be sown from the end of March until about May. Sow seeds in seed beds or containers about 1 cm deep. Plant out when they are about 12 cm high (four weeks), selecting only the strongest seedlings for best results. Plants are spaced 50 cm apart in 1 m wide rows. Cauliflower is not as hardy as cabbage in hot weather and quality is poor, often resulting in shooting to seed before developing curds. When heads are beginning to form soil disturbance should be kept to a minimum as developing curd can become loose and leafy. As the curds develop the outer leaves should be drawn over it and tied together to protect the curd from sunburn and keep it white.



FERTILISER

Cauliflower is a heavy feeder and the seed bed should have at least 2 kg of well rotted animal manure or compost dug into each square metre. Liming the soil at 200-300 g/m² plus is also considered important. A mixed fertiliser high in phosphate at 70 g/m² plus an additional 25 g/m² of superphosphate is worked into the rows a week or so before planting. A side dressing of 65 g/m² of the same fertiliser at two to three weeks after transplanting is also recommended. Spraying the seed bed with molybdenum helps to control whiptail, which is brought on by a deficiency of this element. The molybdenum mixture should be 7 g/L of water. Two applications of this in the seedling stage are generally sufficient.

WATERING

Cauliflower needs plenty of water and a good soaking when needed is more beneficial than frequent light watering.

HARVESTING

Cauliflowers are ready when the heads have reached a suitable size with compact curds. This is usually about seven to 10 weeks after transplanting. Cut the heads off with a sharp knife leaving four or five leaves below the curd, which are later trimmed off.



PESTS

Caterpillars and aphids are the main pests of cauliflower.

For information on insect control, please refer to the DPIFM Entomology website at <http://pestinfo.nt.gov.au/>

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