

Information about the Kentucky State University Cooperative Extension Program



Facts about Bok Choy (*Brassica rapa subsp. Chinensis*)

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Introduction to Bok Choy

- ❖ Bok choy, also known as Chinese cabbage, is a leafy green vegetable that has gained popularity for its unique flavor, and versatility in culinary applications. Bok choy is a member of the Brassicaceae family, which includes cabbage, broccoli, and kale.
- ❖ Originating in China over two millennia ago, Bok choy has been a staple in Asian cuisines, particularly in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese cooking. Bok choy is characterized by its thick white or green stalks and dark green leaves, which are arranged in a cluster resembling a small, compact head of lettuce.
- ❖ There are several varieties of Bok choy, including standard Bok choy, which has broader stalks and leaves, and baby Bok choy, which is smaller and more tender. Bok choy is a notable example of an ethnic vegetable introduced to USA by Asian immigrants who brought their culinary traditions with them.



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Cultivation and Growing Bok choy

- ❖ Choose a well-drained fertile soil with a pH level between 6.0 and 7.5. Container gardening is an option for small spaces.
- ❖ Incorporate organic matter or aged manure to improve soil if necessary.
- ❖ Start seeds indoor 4-6 weeks before the last frost date or sow directly into the garden at the beginning of spring once the soil can be worked.
- ❖ Plant seeds ½ inch deep and space 6-8 inches apart, rows should be spaced 12-18 inches apart.
- ❖ Germinates within 4-8 days under ideal conditions which include soil temperatures (around 50-85°F) and adequate moisture.



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Care and Maintenance

- ❖ Water Bok choy as needed to keep soil moist but not waterlogged. Water at the base to prevent wetting the foliage, which can increase the risk of disease.
- ❖ Mulch around plants to conserve moisture.
- ❖ Apply balanced fertilizer or compost before sowing seed to provide adequate nutrition.
- ❖ Monitor Bok choy regularly for signs of pests and implement appropriate control measures.



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Harvesting and Post-Harvest Handling

- ❖ Baby Bok choy should be harvested when the plants are about 6 inches tall. Mature Bok choy plants should reach about 12-18 inches tall, and the leaves should be full sized and firm.
- ❖ To harvest whole plant, use a sharp knife or garden shears to cut plant at the base, above the soil line.
- ❖ For continuous harvest, pick individual leaves starting from the outer leaves.



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Sources

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