

Curly Leaf Kale by Amy Weber

Family/Botanical Name: *Brassica oleracea* var. *sabellica*

Variety: 'Blue Curled Scotch'

Kale is a cool season leafy vegetable in the Brassica/Cabbage family. It is becoming increasingly popular due to its high nutritive content. Kale is a superfood, being low in calories and a great source of Vitamins A & C, iron, and numerous phytonutrients. It has a milder flavor than other greens.



Even as a young child, I've always loved most types of greens. When growing up, my family grew most of the vegetables we ate. Each fall, we would plant a patch of turnip greens, usually harvesting them after a frost. I still love the turnip greens but eat kale more often since it's so easy and quick to prepare.



The next few weeks will be an ideal time to plant Kale. With a little more time on my hands this fall (Thank you, Covid!), I have time to do a little fall gardening. I planted 'Blue Curled Scotch' Kale, a classic heirloom variety. For a container, I'm repurposing my recycling bin. It's sturdy, deep, and already has drainage holes. I filled it with a combination of organic raised bed soil mix and compost. I planted eight plants, about 9" apart. That might be a little crowded, but I can thin if needed. Since we still have some hot weather ahead, I placed the container where it will get a little afternoon shade. Since Kale is grown for its leaves

and not flowers, it can tolerate light shade. It is extremely cold-tolerant and will grow throughout the winter.

Growing Requirements:

- Kale grows in full sun to partial shade.
- Kale grows best in well-drained, fertile slightly acidic soil that is high in organic matter and has a pH of 5.5 to 7.0. Kale prefers consistent moisture and nutrients. Mulching around the plants will help retain the moisture. Feed regularly with a high nitrogen slow-release fertilizer or top dress with compost.
- Grows throughout the winter in Zones 7 – 9. Because it is cold-tolerant, many have success with it in Zone 6. Consistent moisture, 1 – 1.5 inches per week, is key to surviving freezing temperatures.
- For best flavor, harvest after the first frost. A frost is said to "sweeten" the taste and make the leaves more tender. You can harvest the outer leaves and allow the center of the plant to continue to grow.

"Keep it Simple Kale" – Remove thick portion of the stem and tear leaves into small pieces. Wash well and lightly drain so leaves are still wet. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large pot on medium heat. Peel and gently mash 2 cloves of garlic. Add garlic and greens to pot, cover and allow to steam for about 3 or 4 minutes. Remove lid, stir, and season to taste. Continue to cook for a few more minutes until greens are just tender and retain their bright green color. Enjoy!

Photo Credits:

Kale Container photo by Amy Weber

Mature kale and recipe photo from *Pixabay*

References:

content.ces.ncsu.edu/kale

www.thespruce.com/growing-kale-1403516

