

Ethiopian Kale

Introduction

Ethiopian kale (*Brassica carinata*), also called *loshuu*, can be found throughout eastern and southern Africa in both lowland and highland conditions. It can grow both on light and heavy soils but does not like “wet feet.” It does not need a long cold season to produce flowers and seeds like cabbages and ordinary kale or *Sukuma wiki*.

Seeds and Sowing

Seeds should be collected from healthy, disease-free plants. Harvest when the pods are fully dry, just before they open naturally in the field. Seeds can be dried further in the *shade* for 3-5 days. Properly dried seeds should be kept in a closed container to avoid damage by insects. Alternatively, seeds can be obtained from Horti-Tengeru at P.O. Box 1253; Arusha, Tanzania.

Seeds should be sown in seedbeds, in rows spaced 15-20 cm apart. Sow seeds 1-2 cm apart. Closer spacings can lead to damping off disease. Transplant when seedlings are 15 cm tall, at a spacing of 35-50 cm in the row, with 50-75 cm between rows.

Crop Management

Ethiopian kale responds very well to manure. If possible, well-decomposed manure should be incorporated into the soil before planting. Nitrogen fertilization is needed for a high leaf yield and an application of 100 kg nitrogen per hectare is recommended. Apply the nitrogen as a side dressing around the main stem of the plant. Make sure that fertilizer is not spilled on the leaves since it will burn them.

Frequent irrigation is needed for good yields. Plants suffering from drought will begin to flower and stop producing leaves.



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Once we ensure that seeds have been collected from disease-free plants, chances of seed-borne pathogens are limited. It is important to control aphids since these act as a carrier of Turnip Mosaic Virus.

Harvesting and Postharvest

Once established, frequent harvesting of leaves or shoots may take place. The smaller-leaved varieties are often collected in the form of shoots. Generally speaking, varieties with large leaves, such as *Lambo*, are tall and tend to have few side shoots whereas varieties with small leaves have many side shoots. Young shoots from bushy varieties can only be harvested with a short stem, since the basal part is woody. More frequent and intense plucking of leaves tends to prolong the vegetative phase. The variety *Mbeya Green* yields about 30t/ha.

Ethiopian kale leaves, once harvested, should be kept cool. Sprinklings of water on the leaves can prolong storage life. Avoid overwatering since this will encourage rot.

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